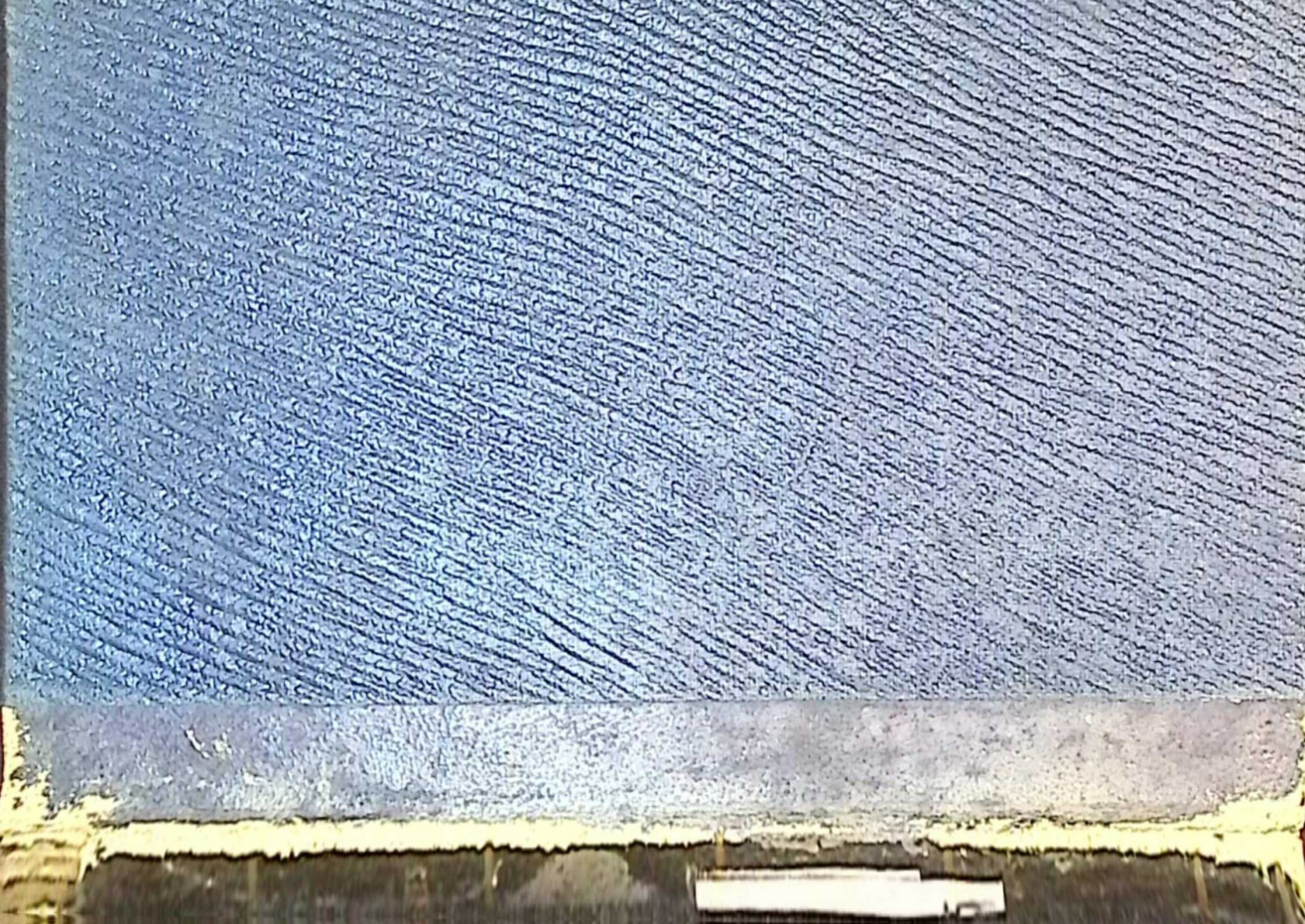

# THE CLASSMATES

OR

# THE COLLEGE REVIVAL.

BY

A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER.

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# PREFACE.

THE following sketch is not a fiction. Its incidents have been thrown into shape and connection; but they are all facts, and they are all connected with the personal history and experience of the writer. They have been narrated for two purposes. One is, to satisfy those parents, who fear to send their sons to college, that those institutions which are decidedly religious in their character, may prove the spiritual birth-places of their children, as they have been to multitudes of our precious youth. The other is, to show the youthful reader the reality of religion, and

lead the inquirer to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. If it shall accomplish by God's blessing either of these purposes, it will fulfil every wish, and repay every moment's thought and labour of its

AUTHOR.

# THE CLASSMATES.

## CHAPTER I.

### A MOTHER'S ILLNESS.

The sun was shining brightly on the beautiful square which adorns the centre of one of the fairest towns in New England, as a group of college students crossed it with the eager step of youth, on the morning of a lovely day in the spring of 183—. They were on their way to the post-office, that common centre of attraction to those who are at a distance from home and its loved circle. Among them was one to whom we will give the name of Edgar Robinson. He was about seventeen years of age, tall,

well formed and active, and his kindling eye and rapid step showed him to be of an ardent and impulsive temperament. Two years before, he had left home, and followed by the prayers of pious parents had entered upon the duties and temptations of college life. He had pursued his studies with success, and had already won more than one of the prizes for scholarship offered to his class. But as yet he knew nothing of the power and beauty of religion. The influence of his early training preserved him from becoming a scoffer at sacred things, and ensured an outward respect for Christianity and its institutions. But he had no real faith in divine things, and no love for the service of God. His favourite companions were those who were distinguished for their talent, or their social qualities,

rather than for their moral worth, and the impressions which had been made upon his mind by the counsels and example of his pious parents, were fast fading under their influence. Sceptical thoughts occasionally entered his mind. Religion seemed to him at times to be a delusion, at times a gloomy bondage to superstition. And though he would scarcely allow it to himself, much less avow it publicly by word or deed, he was in danger of becoming involved in the sophistries of scepticism, and led far away from the God of his fathers.

A letter awaited him at the post-office. It bore his father's well-known hand, yet the characters seemed hastily formed, and there was a tremulousness about the superscription that seemed to betoken some unusual agitation on the part of the

writer. He knew not why, but he trembled as he looked at it, and though he had eagerly expected news from home, yet now that the letter was in his hands, he shrunk from opening it. With an effort he broke the seal, and at a glance possessed himself of the contents. Ah! well might he start back with grief and horror from those few hasty lines. His mother, his darling mother, loved with all the intensity of an ardent and susceptible nature, was at the point of death. He must hasten home without a moment's delay, if he would receive her dying blessing! Even then he might be too late!

In an hour he was upon the road. It was but a few hours' ride, but it never seemed so long before. There was but one thought in his mind, one deep, absorbing feeling in his heart. "My mother!

let me but see her once more! Let me but receive her parting blessing! Oh! never to see her again! never to hear her say, God bless thee, my son! The thought is agony. The burden is greater than I can bear."

Edgar Robinson's mother was worthy of this feeling on the part of her son. She was no ordinary woman. She had been gifted by her Creator with many of the finest qualities both of mind and heart, which dignify and adorn human character. Her mind was one of uncommon quickness, vivacity and brilliancy. It had been highly cultivated and enriched by an acquaintance with the best thoughts of the best authors. A vivid and poetic fancy gave a charm to her conversational efforts, and to the productions of her pen; while her cheerful

temperament, and dignified yet affable deportment, endeared her to her friends, and commanded the instinctive homage of the stranger.

No mother could be more tenderly attached to her children, or more faithful to all their wants and interests. She felt that they were precious gifts from God; not the mere creatures of a day, but instinct with immortal life; not the mere playthings of maternal affection, but living souls to be trained up for God and for immortality. She had exalted views of the nature of the family institution. She looked upon it as a religious institution, organized by God in the infancy of our race, for the highest temporal and spiritual well-being of his creatures. She looked on the family as the place where God intended that those seeds should be

sown by a parent's hand, and watered with a parent's tears, whose fruit should be at last garnered in heaven. She felt that her great work for her children was not merely to make them graceful, accomplished, and successful, but virtuous, pious and useful. She was not indifferent to the personal appearance, manners, or accomplishments of her children. No mother was more diligent and judicious in her attention to these matters. But the paramount and absorbing consideration with Mrs. Robinson, was to train up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to secure the symmetrical development through cultivation, and the final glory of their spiritual and immortal nature. With such views of the nature, duties, and ends of the family state, she had entered upon the great

work of rearing her children, and had been always a most faithful, tender, and laborious cultivator of the little vineyard which God had committed to her care.

It had been Mrs. Robinson's desire and endeavour to surround her children with the best influences from their earliest years. She felt that, in their infancy and childhood, no better earthly influence could be provided for them than her own. She knew that no heart could feel for them as hers could; no hand so minister to their wants. She felt that, as they were dependent on her for the first nourishment of their feeble physical existence, there might at the same time be something like the flowing in of the prominent traits of her mental and moral character into their minds and souls. She had peculiar views of the connection

between the mother and the child, and believed that while the intellectual and spiritual life of the mother streams out and plays around the child, the sights, and sounds, and life-workings which come from her, are those which have the most power over the opening being of the unconscious one. Therefore she would not allow her young children to be separated from her, and given up to the care of strangers or hirelings. The impressions to be made upon their virgin souls were too momentous to be derived from such sources. She was not one of those mothers who, intent upon their own selfish or sinful gratification, satisfy their maternal responsibilities when their little ones are arrayed in fine linen and graceful embroidery, betray no signs of physical suffering, and cause them as little confine-

ment and trouble as possible. She gave to them her time and thoughts, her constant supervision, and her earnest prayers.

As her children grew up and emerged from the nursery, Mrs. Robinson still endeavoured to surround them with the best social and moral influences. Their company, their books, their teachers, their amusements, were all selected with the most scrupulous care, and with the most anxious regard to their real and permanent welfare. She regarded it as very inconsistent for Christian parents to commit the education of their children to those who disregard entirely their spiritual nature, and their immortal destiny. Having solemnly dedicated her children to God, and promised to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, she would not commit the

whole process of their intellectual training, in those years when an eternal bias may be, and often is, given to the character and destiny, to those who never think of preparing these jewels to sparkle for ever in the sunlight of heaven. She believed that an immortal being could not be truly or safely educated where no provision was made for the cultivation of the diviner part, and under a system of mental training which was essentially godless. Nor did she desire to purchase artificial gracefulness of carriage for them, at the expense of real gracefulness of heart; for she believed that if the heart and soul were properly trained and cultivated, the cultivation would shine through the outward investiture. So she did not regard the ball-room as a proper department of the education of a

spiritual and immortal being. It was ever her wish to guard her children against the corrupting influences of large and dissipated assemblies, late hours, indiscriminate frequenting of places of public amusements, extravagance in dress or personal decoration, false notions of gentility or honour, contempt for labour, and all the fashionable follies and vices which infest the times, and threaten to sweep away the simplicity and purity of the family institution.

Family religion was the law of Mr. Robinson's household, and at the sacred shrine of domestic piety his wife was a worthy and faithful priestess. It was a cardinal doctrine with both of them, that there could be no sphere on earth where true religion might be more beautiful in its development, and more benignant in

its influence, than the family circle. There was its natural foundation and its appropriate home. There the finest and purest affections of our nature find their centre. There natural ties encircle the heart most closely, and inspire it with the deepest interest in the welfare of each beloved member of the household. Religion strengthens and refines these ties, and makes a pious family the best type of the heavenly state.

These were the principles which Mrs. Robinson endeavoured to act upon in the religious training of her children. In their infant years she endeavoured to teach them in simple language the great truths of religion. She delighted to gather up for them the touching narratives of the Bible. The stories of Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel; of the fiery

furnace, and the lion's den; of the infancy and life of Jesus, Paul and Timothy, and the many beautiful and impressive histories contained in that wonderful book, were like household words in her family. She taught her young children the cradle hymns and nursery songs, which conveyed sound and pure instruction to their minds, in the simple rhymes which are so attractive to the ears of childhood. Daily they knelt by her side and repeated after her, "Our Father which art in heaven," and that familiar verse of petition which one of our great men used to repeat daily to the close of his long and honoured life :

"Now I lay me down to sleep," &c.

Thus she endeavoured always to make religion prominent in her household, and to make it attractive also. It was never

associated with austerity and gloom, but shed its serene and gladsome light all around her, illuminating the house with its gentle lustre, and investing her own presence with its sacred halo.

It was also a peculiarity of this excellent woman, that she did not indulge in extravagant desires for the worldly prosperity of her children, or take undue pains to promote it.

She believed that great beauty, great wealth, great influence, and great fame, are more often trials than blessings. Though surrounded with an abundance of the good things of this life, she ever conducted her household affairs in a modest and unostentatious style; and endeavoured to impress upon the minds of her children, that they should aim to excel in all that was excellent and useful, and

not to aim at great wealth or lofty position, as if these were indispensable to happiness or honour. She carefully avoided filling their minds with exaggerated views of worldly prosperity, or shaping all their training for a sphere which they might never reach, or reaching find it a place of weariness and vexation of spirit. She was never over solicitous about their worldly establishment; she desired earnestly that they should have sound health, a thorough education, and virtuous principles; and then she was content to leave them to the care of a wise and kind Providence for the success of their earthly career. She sought, both by precept and by example, to give them sober and moderate views of life, reasonable expectations from the world, and a disposition in all things to love the praise of God, more than the praise of men.

Such was Edgar Robinson's mother. Such was she, towards whose dying bed he was hastening with a heart agitated by the most painful apprehensions. For the first time in his life, he appreciated the priceless blessing of such a mother, and shuddered to think of the fearful probability that she was lost to him for ever. His memory ran back to the days of his childhood; again he felt himself pressed to his mother's bosom; he felt her warm kiss on his childish brow; he heard her say, "God bless thee, my boy!" He remembered all his youthful waywardness and disobedience, and the scalding tears of remorse ran down his cheeks as he thought of many a scene in the past, where he inflicted a pang upon her gentle heart. And then his fancy pictured her lying pale and cold in death, and the

thought was agony to him, that he might not be able even to kneel before her and ask her forgiveness, and one parting benediction. In the midst of such thoughts and memories, the coach stopped at his father's house. In an instant he was at the door—it was opened by his father, who strained him to his bosom, while the strong man's tears fell down upon his son, as he exclaimed in broken accents, "My dear boy, you have just come to see your mother die!"

And then they went into the familiar chamber, and Edgar stood by his mother's side. Disease had imprinted its fatal seal deeply on that pale face. The traces of many a sore struggle with pain were there; a mortal pallor overspread her countenance, and the lamp of life seemed faintly flickering and almost ex-

tinguished. Yet obvious and eloquent tokens of inward peace, and holy calm, were blended with the traces of physical agony and strife. There was not a shade of fear upon her brow; not an expression of doubt or foreboding on her face. An angel, fresh from paradise, could scarcely have borne upon his brow fewer marks of this world's conflict with sin and sorrow. A seraph, standing in the light of God, could scarce have worn a sweeter smile. If death has terrors, they were veiled there. If the grave has any fearfulness, there was no sign of it on that countenance. There was a quiet in the room, as if they who stood around were on holy ground. Medical men were there, who had seen death often, and were habituated to its every phase, but they looked on, as if they had never seen anything

like this before. Even grief was hushed, and sorrow held her breath; and the wild paroxysm of weeping was spell-bound by the strange witchery that was around that bed of death. With a low, but clear voice, she bade her loved ones farewell, gave them her last counsels, her parting blessing. With the triumphant faith of the Christian on the border-line of glory, she spoke of the Saviour in whom she trusted, and the heaven to which she was going. With the yearning tenderness of the mother, she blessed her children, and bade them follow. Slowly, lingeringly, sadly, they left her side, at the bidding of her physicians, and retired with the assured belief, that they had looked for the last time on a living mother's loving face.

But she did not die. God had work,

the work of years for her yet to do. He had a purpose in bringing her down to the shore of Jordan, but it was not his will that she should make the crossing then.

When the bright sunshine of the spring morning came, there was light in that dwelling, the light of hope and gladness. The crisis was past, and though it seemed like a miracle, they believed that she would be with them yet. "Her faith has saved her life," said one of her faithful and kind physicians. "Had she been less calm and peaceful, she could not have survived."

Edgar long remembered those words. As he returned again to college, the whole scene in what he thought was his mother's dying-room, was ever present to his mind. "Her faith has saved her life!"

"There must be something in religion; something real, powerful, superhuman, glorious! Yes! there must be something in religion," was the mental conclusion to which the mind of Edgar Robinson not unreasonably came, as once more he crossed the broad square of ———, and entered the college halls.

## CHAPTER II.

### A COLLEGE REVIVAL.

THERE was a revival in college. Through the long entries you could hear the accents of prayer from the different rooms, and now and then the song of praise and rejoicing over a new-born hope just dawning in some youthful sinner's soul. Meetings for prayer were held in the different recitation rooms, conducted by pious students, which were numerously attended. An atmosphere of unwonted solemnity pervaded the venerable halls, and hung over the college-green. The work went on, daily increasing in interest and ex-

tent, until there were comparatively few who were not brought more or less under its influence.

Among these few, was our young friend Edgar Robinson. He could not, of course, be ignorant of the prevailing state of religious feeling in college, but he regarded it with mingled and conflicting emotions. Ever since his return, the scenes through which he had lately passed in his mother's chamber, had been present to his mind. Her strong triumphant faith had sorely shaken his nascent scepticism. Her peace and serenity on the border of the grave, had impressed him with a deeper sense of the reality and value of religion. He had not mingled as freely as was his wont with his gay companions. He had cherished some vague thoughts and resolutions, as to

his future course in reference to religion. But he had sought no counsel from his pious classmates, and since the commencement of the revival, he had carefully avoided participating in its scenes. He was inclined to distrust much of the enthusiasm which was manifested by the students, and one or two cases of what were called "sudden conversions," had inclined him more decidedly to pronounce the whole thing, mere excitement, or fanaticism. He did not, however, openly oppose or deride the work. He determined to be a looker on, to watch the progress of feeling, to maintain a strict neutrality of position, and watch the event.

Among his classmates was one by the name of Smith; whom Robinson had always regarded with respect as a man of

evident sincerity in his religious feelings. He was not a man of great refinement or high cultivation, but of clear logical mind, studious habits, frank and honest temperament, and of consistent religious life. He had been greatly interested in the revival which was in progress, and most active in efforts for its promotion. He had daily looked for Robinson at the meetings for prayer, and being daily disappointed, he determined to embrace the first opportunity of addressing him on the subject. Robinson roomed alone. Smith, making some enquiry about a recitation which they attended together his ostensible excuse, called at his room in the hope of being able to converse with him in reference to his religious feelings. Robinson, though he suspected his object, received him cordially, and the following conversation occurred :

"I have not seen you at any of the religious meetings lately."

"No, Smith, I have not attended them."

"May I ask the reason of your absence?"

"Certainly; the only reason is that I have not felt any desire to attend."

"Let me ask another question, then. Do you not feel the importance of the subject of religion?"

"Smith, I see your drift, and I saw it the moment you came in at that door. You came here to talk with me about religion. Your question about that lesson in Conics, was all moonshine. *That* never brought you here."

"Well, Robinson, it is true, I did come for that very object, and I hope that you will not be offended with a classmate for

taking an interest in your spiritual concerns. I have looked for you at the meetings, and not seeing you, I resolved that I would address you personally on this subject, which, however you may regard it, I consider the one of supreme importance to every right thinking man in college or out of it. I hope that you will pardon me if I have taken an unwarrantable liberty."

"Well, Smith, now that you've owned up so fairly, I will tell you frankly that I am glad you have called on this errand. You know that I am not a religious man, though I am the son of religious parents. Since I have been in college, I have thought a great deal more of honours than I have of religion. Though I have passed through a scene lately, that has somewhat driven college honours out of my head, I

don't want to be preached to, or preached at. If you will talk with me rationally on this subject, and relieve doubts that often trouble me, and convince me, if I am in error, and give me sober counsel where I need it, I will be glad to talk with you. But I want you to understand that what you call a revival has nothing at all to do with my feelings. I don't think I have much faith in these things. I shan't go to any of these meetings. I don't care to hear about them. I will talk with you, if you will talk with me in the language of common sense, and promise not to show too much pious indignation when you find out what an unbeliever I am. For I tell you beforehand, that I am very far from taking for granted much that you doubtless firmly believe about what is commonly called religion."

"Very well, Robinson, I accept your terms, and will try to talk with you, as you say, in the language of common sense; which will not be very hard for me to do, as I am not much in the habit of using any other language on any subject. And if I were, religion is the very last subject in the world upon which I would speak in any other. But you speak of being an unbeliever. I do not suppose that a man educated as you have been, can have any doubts about the truth of Christianity, or any difficulty in receiving, intellectually at least, its cardinal doctrines."

"Why I am not so sure of that. It is true, I have been piously educated; and have always been taught the Bible, and the catechism. The latter, I used to repeat every Sunday afternoon to my good

father, from 'What is the chief end of man?' to 'What doth the conclusion of the Lord's prayer teach us?' But I have been sorely tempted lately by doubts on the whole subject of Christianity, and have been so perplexed and mystified about it, that it seems often to me, that the shortest and best way is to ignore the whole thing, and just go it blind 'with Hobbes, Hume, Voltaire, *et id omne genus.*'"

"Surely, Robinson, you cannot be serious. You don't mean to say that you have any serious doubts as to the existence of a God."

"I do mean to say that very thing. There are times when it seems to me that I must land in utter scepticism. There does not appear to be any satisfactory evidence that such a being actually ex-

ists. And if I had not been educated to believe it, and if I did not think it would break my mother's heart to think that her son was what is called an infidel, I verily believe that I should have avowed my want of faith in this very fundamental truth of your Christianity."

"Did you ever read Chalmers's Natural Theology ?"

"No, I have read very little on these subjects, though I have thought a great deal about them."

"Well, Chalmers has an argument on this point, which I think is one of the clearest and most unanswerable in the world. He takes the ground that it is a sheer impossibility to prove that there cannot be a God. For how can any man arrive, by any process of reasoning, at such a stupendous conclusion ? The very

attributes of Deity are implied in the denial of the possibility of Deity. Unless a man can say that eternity presents no convincing evidences of the divine existence, which he cannot do without claiming to be himself eternal, he cannot say that God is not. Unless he can say that the entire universe of matter or mind presents no such evidence, which he cannot do, without claiming to be himself omnipotent, he cannot say that there is no God. Unless he can say that he knows absolutely everything, and he cannot say this without claiming to be himself omniscient, he cannot know that there is no God. Unless, therefore, the objector is eternal, omniscient, and omnipresent, he cannot know that there is no God. But if he be eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient, he must be God himself; therefore,

to deny the existence of the divine being, is to arrogate to ourselves the very attributes of the God whom we deny. This is, in short, Chalmers's argument. What do you think of it ?"

"It is certainly very forcible, and to me, at least, quite novel. But still, it is only an argument against the impossibility of the divine existence. I have never taken that ground even in my most unbelieving moods. The great temptation with me is to doubt, because I cannot find any satisfactory evidence that God actually exists. Most men seem to take this for granted ; my mind requires proof, and at times, it seems to me, as if there were no adequate convincing testimony to this great truth, such as satisfies the mind. I do not say there cannot be a God, but I want more demonstration that he really is."

"Very well, Robinson, you can find evidence enough to convince yourself, if you will seek it in a candid spirit. But do you not see that you have made a very important admission in acknowledging that *God may be?* Even if you cannot satisfy yourself that he is, yet if you cannot satisfy yourself that he is not, it is wiser and safer to give this great idea the benefit of your doubts. If there is really no God, the man who believes in him is no worse off; while if it should at last turn out that he does exist, then he has immeasurably the advantage over his neighbour, who has rejected this truth, and lived accordingly."

Robinson evidently felt embarrassed by his classmate's argument. He rose from his chair, and walked several times through the room in deep thought. Then

reseating himself, he said in a very serious tone:

"I do not see how that position can be questioned. I certainly dare not say that God is impossible, and if he may be as you say, it is better not to deny him. But still, to my mind, the very magnitude and importance of the truth in question, renders more exacting the necessity that it should be fully proved. Now, if I could have such evidence that God exists, as I have that the world itself exists, or that I myself am, it would seem impossible to doubt for a moment. I can see the things around me, I can hear and feel them, and thus be assured of their existence. Give me such evidence of God, and I will believe implicitly in him."

"You are very much mistaken,

Robinson, in supposing that what you rely on as evidence, in the case of material objects, that which applies to the senses, is really the strongest kind of evidence in itself, or the most satisfactory to your own mind. You believe in many things about which your senses have no knowledge. You believe in some things which you cannot see, or hear, or feel, just as firmly as you believe in those which appeal to the senses. You believe that the sun shines. I ask you why? You say, because I see its light, and feel its beams. You believe too, that two and two make four, or that the whole of a thing is greater than any one of its parts. You believe this just as strongly as you believe that the sun shines. But the evidence in the one case, is very different from the evidence

in the other. And you do not ask, or expect, the same kind of evidence in the one case, as the other, because the nature of things does not admit of it.

"But you believe a great many things which you cannot see, quite as firmly as those which you can see. You alluded just now to your own existence. Well, how do you know that you exist? You have a body, and you have a mind. You believe in the mind just as firmly as you do in the body, yet you cannot see the mind, you cannot hear it, you cannot feel it. Now why do you demand evidence in regard to God's existence, before you will believe in him, which you do not demand in regard to many other truths, about which you have no doubt whatever, and yet of which your senses take no cognizance at all? It

is just as reasonable to reject the idea that you have a mind, because you cannot see it, as to reject the idea of God, because you cannot see him."

"But after all, Smith, we cannot be as certain of spiritual things, as we are of material. You know the old maxim, 'seeing is believing.'"

"Yes, I know it, and I know that it is one of those current maxims which have a great deal more sound than sense in them. There are many cases where the senses utterly deceive us. The history of spectral delusions is full of illustrations on this point. You may remember the famous case of the Spanish nobleman, who was haunted by an apparition, which assumed different shapes, until at last it took the form of a skeleton. Wherever he went, it followed him; he saw its ghastly

shape always near him; no argument or persuasion could convince him that it was a delusion of the imagination. His reply invariably was, 'I see it,' and therefore he believed. The idea preyed upon him to such an extent, that it caused his death. Now in this case, sight was no evidence of reality, no sufficient basis of faith. Further, it is not true that we can be more certain of material than of spiritual things. You say, the sun shines to-day. How do you know that it shines?"

"Why, I see its beams streaming all around me."

"But how do you know that you see them? Have you ever thought of that? Where is the seat of knowledge? It is not in the eye, not in the mere material organ, but in the mind. It is a mental operation after all which convinces you that

you see the sun shine to-day. Knowledge cannot exist in matter. Your eye cannot know anything. It is the mind that knows, and assures you of the reality of what you see. Therefore, the very fact, that you know that you see the sun shine, proves to you that you have a mind, though you cannot see that mind. You see, then, it comes to this. You cannot have any knowledge of a material object, without, at the same time, being convinced of the existence of an immaterial and invisible object. And you can, after all, be just as certain of the existence of things which you cannot see, as of those which you can see. If, then, you find no difficulty in believing in your own mind, though it is spiritual, invisible, intangible, and incomprehensible in its essence, why should you think it irrational or cre-

dulous to believe in the existence of a spiritual, invisible, intangible, and incomprehensible being? Why is it more absurd to believe in one great mind, the ruling spirit of the universe, than in one little mind, the ruling spirit of your little world?"

"Upon my word, Smith, you push me hard with your logic. I don't know that I ever saw the subject in this light before. I believe I must acknowledge that my position is not tenable, that the evidence of visible and material things is more complete and satisfying than that of invisible and spiritual things. I certainly never thought that every time I believed in anything which I saw, I was establishing a ground of proof of the reality of a thing which I could not see, my own mind. But what are the evidences of the existence of God, on which you most rely?"

"Do you remember our looking at the plans for our new Society Hall some time ago?"

"Perfectly well, and capital plans they were, too."

"I remember that you so expressed yourself at the time, and that you said, that though you had never heard the architect's name before, you were convinced that he understood his business well, for you never had seen a more complete and appropriate design for such a building."

"I remember saying so, and I still think so. You know that I have a passion for designing and contriving buildings. I ought to have been apprentice to a carpenter, instead of being sent here to study Greek and Latin, and break my shins in trying to cross the '*Pons Asino-*

*rum.*' But what has this to do with what we were talking about?"

"The moment you examined those plans, you saw that they were the work of a mind, and a mind of no ordinary power. You saw intelligence, wisdom, taste, and skill displayed in every line. You were carried back directly to the architect, a man whom you had never seen, of whom you had never heard, and yet you were not only firmly convinced of his existence, but you conceived a high respect for his abilities, for you saw the evidence of them in the work before you. Now come here, and look out upon this scene."

It was a lovely day in June. The window, at which the two friends sat, overlooked the town and the harbour, and presented to them a spectacle of na-

tural beauty, not often surpassed in any part of this beautiful world. Long rows of magnificent elms lined the broad streets, and arched them with their interlacing branches. The bright green foliage in its first freshness perfumed the air; the beautiful gardens in every direction were arrayed in all the bloom of the early flowers; while the waters of the placid bay were sparkling in the sun-beams, like molten silver. It was a lovely sight, and the classmates gazed long in silence upon it.

"Whence came these forms of beauty, this world so full of marks and evidences of design?" said Smith. "Every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things, is God."

Robinson made no reply, but sat still gazing on the scene before him. His

sceptical doubts were fast vanishing before the evidence which lay on the pages of the great volume before him, illuminated with the purple and gold of the setting sun. When he at last looked round, Smith was gone. Just then the college bell summoned him to evening prayers.

## CHAPTER III.

### THERE IS A GOD.

His conversation with Smith made a deep impression on Robinson's mind. Yet he was not quite disposed to give up the side of scepticism. His pride of intellect had been sorely humbled by the superiority which he clearly saw his classmate thus far possessed on his side of the argument. He felt as if he was in a manner committed to the other side, and he was inclined to try another contest of logic on the question as to the truth of Christianity. Yet that scene in his mo-

ther's chamber haunted him. Could that be delusion? Was that faith which enabled her to stand so firmly on the border line of time, and look so calmly into eternity, all a dream, or was it rational and well-founded? He could not shake off the influence of that scene, and yet he was not quite prepared to avow himself a believer. He shrunk from the thought of affording his classmate a triumph over him, though he was obliged to confess that Smith thus far had very clearly the best of it. "But there is more to be said on my side," he said to himself. "I'll have another talk with Smith, and see if I cannot stump him yet." Robinson was now in the condition of many a young man with reference to Christianity. His early impressions and education, and the convictions of his conscience, all pointed

towards religion. But his wicked heart, and his proud will, opposed it. He had chosen the position of an objector, and he felt bound, for the sake of consistency, to defend that position. In arguing at first, merely for the sake of argument, he had unconsciously lost the inquirer in the partisan, and now he felt disposed to continue the contest in a partisan spirit, and defend his ground as stoutly as he could, because it was now *his* ground. He must not turn traitor now. He would not acknowledge himself vanquished after one struggle. He would risk the chances of another field.

Meanwhile the revival was progressing with increasing power, and the entire institution was pervaded with its influence. The ordinary college duties were not suspended; every recitation and lecture was

attended as usual. But the solemnity which prevailed everywhere was obvious to the most careless observer. The meetings for prayer and enquiry were crowded daily, and numbers of the students were already beginning to rejoice in the hope that they were regenerated and forgiven men. Still Robinson would not attend the meetings. He carefully avoided any allusion to them. He conversed with no one on the subject, and met every approach on the part of those who alluded to it, with a courteous but decided repulse. But the day after his interview with Smith, he sought his room, and another conversation ensued, very much according to the following tenor:

"Well, Smith, you left me somewhat abruptly yesterday, and the subject of our conversation is in an unsettled posi-

tion, and one not altogether satisfactory to my mind. Suppose we renew it."

It was just on his classmate's tongue to say, "Suppose we ask God's blessing on our conversation;" but he thought that perhaps this might seem to Robinson to savour of cant, and might disgust him. With the prayer in his heart, therefore, he simply assented to the proposition, and his friend proceeded.

"The subject of the evidences of God's existence which are generally relied on by Christians as the basis of their faith, is that on which I wish to confer with you. You regard the works of creation as an important part of these evidences, do you not?"

"Certainly; effects always presuppose a cause, and one adequate to produce them. Marks of design imply a designer. Where

did the world come from? What is the origin of all existence?"

"Well, many men have advocated the doctrine of chance, or casualty, as accounting for the origin of things."

"Do you profess to believe in that theory?"

"That is not the point. It is a theory on the other side. I want you to reply to it, and if it is false to prove it so."

"That task is not a very difficult one. Have you seen the new telescope which has lately been presented to the college?"

"Yes, Professor Oliver showed it to me a few days since. What a magnificent instrument it is!"

"It is indeed. I suppose there is scarcely its equal in this country. Do you know where it came from?"

"No! do you?"

"Why, I suppose it came by chance."

"Nonsense, Smith; you know it must have been made by one of the best philosophical instrument makers in the world. What do you mean by saying it came by chance?"

"What do you mean by saying the world came by chance? What do you mean by saying that the telescope must have had a maker, and a man of great skill and science; and yet that the stupendous worlds which that telescope reveals to your eye, instinct as they may be with life, and crowded with glorious forms of intelligence and beauty, came into existence casually, without a cause, without a maker? Why, Robinson, though I know that men have advocated this theory, yet I never could persuade myself that any man really believed it, un-

til the Bible told me something about men being given up for their wickedness "to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." But the doctrine of chance is so puerile and absurd a doctrine, that it is scarcely worthy to be met with serious argument. Look at the principle of unity and order running through all the works of creation. Look at the immense family of man. How is it that the thousands of parts in the human system all chanced to be arranged symmetrically and harmoniously in this great multitude? Why don't you find some men with their eyes in the soles of their feet, or their mouths under their arms? Does chance ever do anything regularly, systematically, and uniformly? Suppose you throw all the parts of a steam engine together in one heap. How long would

it be before they would happen to come together in the right way, and work harmoniously in propelling a boat, or drawing a train of cars? How long—but it is mere child's play to reason thus; you don't believe in this absurd theory, Robinson, any more than I do, and it is folly to waste time and breath, in knocking down men of straw."

"Why, to tell the truth, this theory never would satisfy my mind, and I never seriously adopted it. But why may not the things we see have existed in an eternal series? This theory has been held by men who were intelligent and acute, and I confess that I do not feel prepared to say, that it may not be sufficient to account for the existence of those things which you ascribe to God, and on which you base your faith in his being."

"As to this theory, it has been advanced by men, who were considered intelligent men, and it has been answered, and its fallacy exposed so thoroughly, that one would think it might sleep as soundly, as in the tomb of the Capulets. I will just read you one answer to it, from Dr. Dwight, which is about as conclusive as any that I have met with. He says, 'It is asserted by atheists, that there has been an eternal series of things. The absurdity of this assertion can be shown in many ways. 1. Each individual in the series is a unit. But every collection of units, however great, is with intuitive certainty numerable, and therefore cannot be infinite. 2. Every individual in the series (take for example a series of men) had a beginning. But a collection of beings, each of which had a

beginning, must, however long the series, have also had a beginning. This, likewise, is intuitively evident. Should it be said, that the first in each series had not a beginning, but was from everlasting, which is the only possible method of evading the answer already given, I reply that, according to this supposition, the first in each series, was uncaused and self-existent, and, containing in itself the principles of eternal existence, could never have ceased to be. At the same time, an endless multitude of finite, self-existent beings, must be admitted on this supposition, possessed in all instances of few and feeble active powers, and, in most instances, of such as are merely passive. Thus, for example, there must have been an eternal man, an eternal lion, an eternal eagle, an eternal oak, an

eternal rose, eternal grass, and in a word, as many eternal, self-existent beings, as there are kinds and sorts of existences in the world; for no being of one kind can possibly produce, or bring into existence, a being of any other kind. Of course, there must have been *one*, eternal and self-existent at the head of every existing series; and at the head of every series of animated beings, an eternal, self-existent pair. From these also, the whole series must have sprung, without any contrivance, and in most instances, without any consciousness. All this, with a train of absurdities following it, literally endless, must be admitted on this supposition. For what purpose must all this be admitted? Truly to relieve us of the difficulty of admitting the existence of One, self-existent Being. At

the same time, the existence of such a finite, self-existent being, is a mere hypothesis, without a shadow of support.' Now, that is what I call argument, Robinson, and if you will read that passage over carefully, and candidly, I think you will say no more about an eternal series."

"Perhaps so, Smith, and yet if these things are so, how will you account for the fact, that so many distinguished men have embraced these theories, and refused to receive the doctrines of Christianity ?"

"Simply, because with these men, the wish was father to the thought. Their characters, and the history of their lives were such, as made the doctrines of religion extremely inconvenient to them. And that is one evidence of the truth of religion, that those who are its most sin-

cere advocates, are men whose character and conduct is such, as you would naturally expect would result from a system which was actually divine.

"If you are at all familiar with the history of leading infidels, you must know how utterly corrupt and abandoned they were, in moral character. Look at Voltaire, for instance: his own countryman and biographer, M. Auget, describes him in terms like these, 'Impiety received him as he left his cradle. He learned to read at the age of three years, by committing an irreligious book to memory. When a boy at school, his daring blasphemies, connected with his natural talents, induced his tutor to predict that he would raise the standard of Deism in France. As his youth advanced, he was admitted into those horrible associa-

tions of debauchees and infidels, in the highest classes of society, who disgraced the close of the reign of Louis XIV. In mature life, he was remarkable for an unsettled, satirical, impetuous disposition; a temper wayward, even to malignity; outrageous violations of the decencies of the domestic circle; ridicule and hypocrisy at the death-bed of his friends; duplicity, untruth, and even perjury, in his dealings; artifice, buffoonery, sarcasm, and the most unblushing calumnies in his controversies; a treachery toward his friends so deeply seated, that he loaded with flatteries and caresses in his letters, the very persons whom he was at the same time covering with ridicule; and even calumniated in clandestine writings, some of those individuals, on whom he was pouring forth, in his ordinary cor-

respondence, the warmest testimonies of friendship or consideration. As he approached old age, his impiety became systematic, restless, aggressive, persevering, malignant, and almost furious. He was accustomed to say, "I am weary of hearing that twelve men established the Gospel; I will see if one cannot overthrow it." I say nothing of the impurity of his conduct, the gross obscenity of his language and conversation, the notorious adultery in which he lived, because all this he avowed. It appears in all he said and did. It is indeed thought nothing of by the infidel party; it forms the conventional style of their books and correspondence, and constitutes one of the darkest features of their moral degradation.' Now with such a picture before you, Robinson, you surely will not base

your faith upon the name of Voltaire. Nor will Thomas Paine afford you a better foundation. You probably know what he was. For dishonesty, pride, cruelty, selfishness, blasphemy, profligacy, adultery, filth and drunkenness, he has been rarely equalled by any of his countrymen. And if you will examine the history of Rousseau, Shaftesbury, Tindal, Hobbes, and other distinguished sceptics, you will be convinced, that any system which bases itself upon such names, must have a rotten foundation."

Robinson made no reply, and his friend proceeded:

"And when you have examined the lives of the champions of infidelity, it will be well for you to ask, what was the character of their closing scenes. Did their system enable them to meet the last

solemn hour with composure and peace? If their theories are correct, there is nothing in death to be contemplated with terror, and nothing beyond the grave to cause a pang. But how have eminent infidels died? It is said that the Hon. Francis Newport, a London barrister, a man of fine education and talents, but a noted infidel, when on his dying bed, exclaimed in the deepest anguish, 'What argument is there now to assist me against matters of fact? Do I assert that there is no hell, while I feel one in my own bosom? Am I certain that there is no retribution, when I feel a present judgment? Do I affirm my soul to be as mortal as my body, when this languishes and that is as vigorous as ever? Wretch that I am! whither shall I fly from this breast? What will become of me? O apostate

wretch! from what hopes art thou fallen! Oh, that I had never known what religion was; then I had never denied my Saviour, nor been so black an heir of perdition! Oh, that I were in hell, that I might feel the worst; and yet I fear to die, because the worst will never have an end!'

"So Voltaire's death-bed was a scene of horror. He alternately supplicated and blasphemed his God, and as death approached, was perfectly overcome with affright and fear. So it was with Paine; so it has been with other sceptics. In the dying hour, infidelity has deserted her friends, and left them to meet the king of terrors alone, and in horror and dismay, to take the leap in the dark! Can this be truth, which has no power to sustain the soul in its lone dread hour? Oh,

Robinson! if you had seen a true Christian meet the dying hour, you could not but be convinced of the truth of religion, and spurn from you the miserable and destroying sophistries of infidelity."

Robinson started to his feet. His face was convulsed with excess of emotion; his eyes were filled with tears; he could not speak, but paced the floor with agitated steps. Again the past came up before him. Again he stood by his mother's bed-side. He saw the pale face lit up with a smile of heavenly peace, like sunshine on the snow. He heard her low, sweet voice, like angels' whispers, speak of Christ, and hope, and heaven; he saw the expression of joyful assurance which shone out upon her face, a testimony to the strength of faith, and the reality of religion, more potent than all the logic

of the schools; and he felt shame, contrition, remorse, corroding and oppressing his heart for doubting his mother's God. He turned to his classmate, and said:

"You touched a tender chord just now, and it thrills yet within my bosom. I *have* seen a Christian on the borders of the grave, and I am constrained to believe that there is truth in religion. The truth is, I have never been a confirmed sceptic. I suppose my conscience troubled me, when I thought of God, and of an hereafter; and I struggled to quiet her voice, by entertaining sceptical doubts and opinions, which never truly satisfied me, though I did not think there was so little foundation for them in reality. But the arguments which you have advanced, and the scene which I just alluded to, are too much for scepticism.

Whether I will, or no, I am obliged to believe that there is a God, and that religion is true."

"I am indeed rejoiced to hear you say so, Robinson. I could not believe that infidelity would satisfy you. The wonder with me is, that men should be willing to do without a God. That they should be willing to bereave the world of a Maker, and themselves of a Father. It seems to me that man's *mind* wants a God. He wants a God in nature. He looks on this wondrous world in its trinity of kingdoms, and its unity of design; the laws and processes of nature, so regular, systematic, and harmonious; the regular return of day and night; the seasons; the laws of light, and heat, and vegetation; the motions of the heavenly bodies; the whole wondrous creation;

and his mind cannot be satisfied unless it sees a God behind it all—a great first cause, an architect of creation, a designing, forming, sustaining hand. If you take away God, you leave him perplexed, dissatisfied, despondent. You cannot give him anything that can take the place of God. And it is an act of folly and cruelty to take away the natural, satisfying, acceptable idea of God from nature, when you cannot put anything in its place that can keep the mind from being tossed on a troubled sea of doubt and conjecture as to the origin of what he sees, and of himself. It is the fool who says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

"Fool indeed," said Robinson, as if speaking to himself, "fool indeed."

"But," continued Smith, "man wants a God in providence. The mother is called

to bend over her first born son, as he lies in the agonies of death. As pang after pang distorts that infant face, as that sweet voice, just now ringing in joyous music through the house, moans and cries in vain for relief, and she feels that with all the deep love that swells her heart, she is—alas! impotent to save; as she closes the eyes, and presses her lips to the marble forehead of her dead babe, what keeps that mother's heart from breaking in that hour of agony? It is her trust in God. It is her simple, sublime faith. She hears her heavenly Father's voice, saying, 'It is well with the child;' and comfort and peace come to her desolate bosom, as she thinks, 'God has called him home; I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' Now let the atheist go into that house

of mourning, and try to comfort that weeping mother. He dare not tell her that chance, or fate, has done this thing. He dare not tell her that her beautiful, her darling boy, was but a clod of clay, now blotted by a stern and inexorable necessity from all existence. He cannot look that weeping mother in the face, and tell her over the dead body of her child, that her trust in God is all a delusion, and bid her take refuge in her loneliness, in the cold and dreary asylum of infidelity. Ah! when we see that the wounded and bleeding heart of man, in all ages, in hours of sorrow, has yearned after God; when we see the sting of trouble and of death, taken away by its precious power; when we see how frail and dying mortals are sustained by it, amid all the vicissitudes and miseries of

life; when we see that it is the ladder which brings angels down to minister to weary men, who lie on pillows of stone, in this desert journey; that it makes them conquerors over death, and bears them safely across its cold waters; what shall we say of that man, who deliberately tries to wrench away from sea-tossed and tempest-driven humanity, this anchor of hope, *faith in God*, when he can put nothing in its place, but the absurd sophisms, impudent negations, and comfortless teachings of blank infidelity.

"And further, it seems to me that not only man's reason and his affections demand a God, but his *conscience* also needs God to account for its existence, and to satisfy its cravings. There is in every human mind, a moral faculty of peculiar independent and

wonderful power. It is like genius, in that it can be better felt than described. Tell me, Robinson, have you not felt it? When the waves of sinful passion have risen in wild fury in your bosom, have they not met this moral crag, and been dashed from its stern and unyielding front, to curl and lash into tempestuous tossings, the ocean of feeling which lies in your breast, and in the breast of every man. I have no doubt that you have felt the workings of this inner law. You have heard its warnings against sin premeditated. You have felt its reproaches for sin committed. It points instinctively to God, true as the needle to the pole. In authoritative and awful tones, it reminds you of your Maker and your Judge. You cannot account for its existence, without believing in God. You

cannot satisfy its demands, and quiet its reproaches, without submitting to God. He who built your conscience, must be acknowledged and obeyed, or that conscience, immortal as your soul, will make your hell for ever!

"Now, let infidelity undertake to minister to a guilty conscience. When the pangs of conviction are on a soul, and its hour of fear and anguish has come; while it has learned its sinfulness, and asks to be forgiven, then let the scoffer and the sceptic attempt its deliverance, and they are utterly impotent. There is a witness for God within that struggling soul, whose testimony they cannot ignore nor invalidate. That soul feels to its centre that there is a God who has stirred these troubled waters within the breast, and who alone can say to the tempest, 'Peace! be still!'

"'The theology of conscience,' says Dr. Chalmers, 'has done more to uphold a sense of God in the world, than all the theology of academic demonstration.' It reveals a law, and points to a Lawgiver. It urges to holiness, and teaches that the Lawgiver is holy. It makes us wretched when we sin, and assures us that He who made it for this end, abhors and will punish our sin. You must take the conscience out of a man, before he can say, 'There is no God.'"

Robinson had listened intently to his classmate, as with great earnestness and evident feeling, and all unconscious of the length of his remarks, he had thus spoken. He attempted no reply. All sceptical doubts and suggestions seemed to be swept from his mind as Smith proceeded in his argument, and his closing

appeal to his conscience, completed the work. He felt convinced that infidelity was a deceitful and destructive system, and that he could not trust himself to its sophisms a moment longer. His reason was convinced of the truth of religion, and he felt that henceforth, whatever else he might be, he could never be a sincere sceptic. The process, however, with him as yet was purely intellectual. His understanding was convinced, and his natural frankness would not now allow him to continue to hold the position of an objector to the truth of Christianity. To say that he was indifferent to the truth which he now intellectually acknowledged, would not be true. He could not help seeing that to acknowledge God's existence, and yet to live in neglect of the obligations and relations implied in that

great truth, was a monstrous inconsistency. Yet he was inclined to rest for a time at the point of speculative belief. That surely was a better state than one of scepticism or doubt. Yes! there he would rest for a time at least, and perhaps take up the subject at a future season.

"Well, Smith, I thank you heartily for this conversation. You have presented the subject to me in a way which I cannot resist. I shall never avow scepticism again, as to the truth of Christianity. I am convinced that it is true, and I receive it as such. But you must not suppose that I am a believer in the sense in which you believe. I can go no farther than simply to say that I renounce scepticism."

"You must go farther than that, Rob-

inson, or you might as well remain a sceptic. I trust you will go farther. Intellectual faith is important, but only as the starting point. If you remain there, you are in no better position than lost spirits, for the devils also believe and tremble! Do not be satisfied with a bare reception of the idea of God into your mind. Think of all that is involved in that idea. Think of your personal relations to God; of your duty, your danger, your destiny. Think of God's mercy to you in sparing you while you denied or doubted his very existence. Surely you are not going to stop here—you must not! Life and death are hanging upon the course you now take."

The friends parted. Smith went directly to his room, and there commended his classmate to God in earnest prayer

that he might now be led to embrace the system which he acknowledged to be true, and rest upon it with sincere faith for his eternal salvation.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SCEPTICAL DOUBTS DISPELLED.

SEVERAL days had passed since the conversation recorded in our last chapter occurred between Robinson and his classmate. That conversation had driven him entirely clear of scepticism. He saw now, as he had never seen before, that whether he regarded infidelity as a system, and judged of it according to the intrinsic force of its argument—or, whether he looked at its practical workings in the lives and death of its advocates and adherents, it would not bear his scrutiny; he could not, as a rational man, accept it

as his foundation. He resolved that he would never entertain a doubt as to the truth of Christianity again. But this was as far as he was prepared to go. He could not avoid seeing that there were certain consequences flowing from an acknowledgment of the reality of religion, which were fitted to press upon his conscience, and which as he caught some faint glimpses of them, made him somewhat uncomfortable in mind. He knew that God once admitted, ought to be the absorbing idea with every rational soul; that to acknowledge his being with the mind, and practically ignore it in the life, was a gross inconsistency. He felt the truth pushing him, and the impressive language of his friend, "You must go farther," still rung in his ears. But he was not ready to attend to the claims of God

on him personally. He thought that he had made some progress, and felt disposed to rest awhile in his professed intellectual faith, and at some future time continue his investigations. In the mean time, he determined to apply himself with more than ordinary diligence to his college duties. He had a quick mind, great facility in acquiring knowledge, and was particularly fond of classical and belles lettres studies. To these he resolved to apply himself, in the secret hope that he should thus be relieved from that uneasiness of mind, which was the result of his conversations with his classmate.

Still the revival progressed with extraordinary power. The Rev. Dr. Harris, one of the ablest and most successful ministers in New England, visited the institution, and held several meetings with

the students. His simple, lucid style of preaching, his solemn, earnest manner, and the remarkable unction which characterized all his ministrations, rendered him a most valuable instrument in God's hand at such a time. He preached on the Sabbath, in the college chapel; he attended various meetings for prayer and inquiry; he conversed in private with many of the students, and there were many who had reason to bless God for his visit. Robinson still held himself aloof, and steadily refused to attend the weekly meetings. He could not avoid, however, attendance at the chapel on the Sabbath, and the solemn, pungent, practical discourses to which he listened, so different from the dry, didactic lectures on theology which were generally delivered there, were not without their influ-

ence upon his mind. He saw many of his friends and associates deeply impressed, and knew that some of them had professed to be converted. At times he felt almost persuaded to give up everything else, and consider in earnest the subject of personal religion. But he had so long stood aloof, and maintained a position of outward indifference, that he felt in a manner committed to that position, and coward shame prevented him from confessing his interest in divine things. So he confined himself to his room, and studied with unusual diligence for several days. He avoided Smith, for he felt almost afraid to risk another conversation with him. But though he knew it not, he was daily the subject of fervent prayer by his classmate. Smith felt the deepest interest in Robinson, and had determined

in the very beginning of the revival, that he would leave no means untried to secure his friend's conversion. The interviews which had already occurred between them, made him hopeful for the result, and yet he feared that Robinson, who had a good deal of what he called firmness, but which really was sheer obstinacy in his temperament, would persist in remaining at the point of simple speculative belief, and put off the practical duty of seeking God, till the favourable season had passed away. He knew that his case required judicious treatment, and that it would be easy to disgust a man of his sensitive mind with the whole subject. But he looked prayerfully to God for wisdom to direct him, and resolved to embrace every opportunity which might be afforded of further con-

ference with his friend in respect to personal religion.

An opportunity soon presented itself. The friends met one fine Saturday afternoon, on a favourite walk without the town, which led toward a famous rocky point, which commanded a beautiful and extensive prospect.

"You are bound for the rock, I suppose," said Smith.

"Yes, I thought that I could scarcely spend this glorious afternoon in a better way than in seeing the sun set from thence. I have been working unusually hard for some days over my books, and really need air and exercise."

"I was bending my steps in the same direction, so unless you wait for better company, or prefer a solitary ramble, I will walk, and climb with you."

Robinson in truth would gladly have excused himself from the offered companionship, but he was a thorough gentleman, and though he knew Smith's motive, he could not repel an advance made, as he was conscious, only out of a sincere desire for his welfare. He therefore replied in courteous terms, and they pursued their walk together.

It was one of those crystal days in June, when the air is balmy without being oppressive, and the sun-beams bright, without being glaring or scorching. The fields were clad in the fresh, green verdure of the season, and stretching away in the distance, presented a rich and varied landscape, rendered more beautiful by the changing shadows which flitted over it, as the thin, fleecy clouds skimmed away in the air, and for a mo-

ment, softened the brilliance of the sunlight. In the background, the beautiful bay reflected the blue of the firmament, and was tinged with the purple and gold of the declining sun. Robinson's temperament was one which rendered him peculiarly sensitive to external influences, and his quick perception of the beautiful, made him revel in the glories of the natural world. In joyous and enthusiastic tones, he exclaimed, as they walked on:—

"What a glorious afternoon it is! It seems to put new life into me to breathe this delicious air, and look on this beautiful scene. After poring as I have been for the last three days, over old Homer and Terence, it's a grand thing to change the scene, and study such pages as that blue sky, and these green meadows. Just

stop a moment, Smith, and watch those shadows on the hill-side. How softly they come and go, like the passing shade on some fair brow, or beauteous face. Beautiful as I have often thought this region, it never seemed so beautiful as now!"

"It is indeed a lovely scene," his companion replied, "and very refreshing after a week of study, to see it on such a day as this. But you speak as if you had been more than usually occupied with your books; and indeed, I have scarcely seen you out of the division-room, for some days past. What has set you to such close study just now?"

Robinson coloured faintly, and with a little consciousness in his manner, replied, "Oh, nothing special; but I have not been quite as diligent as usual, for a

week or two past, and as my great business in college is to get an education, I have been trying to make up for lost time."

"I agree with you, as to the importance of improving our college opportunities while we have them, and of laying the foundation of a thorough education now, which is about all a man can do in a collegiate course. But after all, Robinson, I should not be surprised if you, diligent and successful student as you are, were somewhat mistaken in your views of education, and its importance."

"I scarcely know what you are driving at, Smith," replied his classmate. "You don't think I attach too much importance to classical studies, which you know I affect rather more than the dry mathematics of which you are so fond."

"No, I was not referring to the subject in that light at all. I mean to say, that while you are as you think, industriously and successfully pursuing the work of acquiring an education, you have left out the most important element from your theory of education."

"How do you make that out?"

"Very easily. Tell me now, Robinson, what do you mean by education?"

"Why, the acquisition of knowledge, I suppose. That is what we entered college for, is it not?"

"Not according to my definition of the word. The mere process of accumulating facts, and storing them away in the mind, is not what I call education."

"What, then, is your idea?"

"I think the very etymology of the word itself, gives you the true idea. I

take education to be, literally, the development and cultivation of the powers of the mind, by which it acquires ability to grasp, with a strong hand, any and every subject of legitimate investigation, and to originate, by a sort of creative energy, profound thought, and luminous conception respecting it. Knowledge, in the highest sense of the term, as has well been said, is not the remembrance of facts, but the intuition of principles. Facts are the medium through which principles manifest themselves, and by which they are illustrated; but to take them for the essence of knowledge, is to mistake the body for the soul. I have somewhere seen, in a recent periodical, a description of education which meets my ideas exactly. The writer says, 'Education in the eminent sense of the term, is dy-

namic, and not atomic. It does not lie in the mind in the form of congregated atoms, but of living, salient energies. It is not, therefore, poured in from without, but springs up from within. The power of pure thought is education. It cannot be, that he who remembers the most, is the most thoroughly educated man, or that the age which is in the posession of the greatest amount of books, and historical information, is the most learned. Learning is the product of a powerful mind, which by self-reflection and absorption in pure practical thought, goes down into those depths of the intellectual world; where as in the world of matter, the gems and gold, the seeds, and germs, and roots are found.'"

"I have never supposed that the mere accumulation of facts in the memory, was

education, any more than the filling of the stomach with food, was health or vigour; but that the one was essential and antecedent to the other."

"Very well; if the nature of education is such as I have stated, then the question is, with what truths shall that mind be brought into contact, which desires to become truly educated? What are the truths which are most appropriate to the immortal mind itself? What truths in the nature of things, possess the greatest power of mental development?

"All truth," said Robinson, "possesses this power. We can scarcely go amiss in our studies. The air, the earth, the deep sea, the great kingdoms of nature, the vast domain of physical science, are all crowded with truth, in investigating and mastering which, the mind acquires

additional strength, and adds to its effective power."

"True," replied his classmate, "all truth does possess more or less of this power. But the question is, what truth possesses it in the highest degree? Now the domain of the physical sciences, broad, and diversified, and beautiful as it is, is yet material in its nature, and limited in its duration. It cannot fully respond even to the intellectual cravings of an immortal mind. It cannot develope its most masterful powers. It cannot satisfy its finest affections. Material truth constitutes but a small part of the subject-matter for the study of a truly educated mind. There are far higher and nobler subjects of thought and investigation. There is an inexhaustible store-house of truths which in depth and grandeur are

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more closely allied to the immortal spirit, and with which the soaring intellect of the thoughtful man, has the strongest affinities. These truths are not found on the earth we tread, nor in the air we breathe, nor in the sparkling firmament to which we look up with admiration. They are above all these."

"What do you call these truths?"

"I call them supernatural, spiritual, eternal truths."

"And in what text-book do you study them?"

"In the text-book of DIVINE REVELATION.

"Now," continued Smith, "you will understand to what I alluded, when I expressed my fears that you had ignored, in your theory and practice, the most important element in education. It is

the supernatural element. I am not speaking now in reference to the moral aspects of this subject, but simply of its intellectual phases, its relations to thorough education. And I say confidently, that no man can become a truly educated man, in the best sense of the term, who leaves out of view this element, and does not make the domain of spiritual truth, the sphere of investigation and study. And therefore, I hold that any system of education which ignores this element, is essentially and radically defective."

"I should like to know your reasons for believing that the study of these truths is essential to education, Smith. I should have placed them in the moral, rather than in the intellectual world. I can imagine that a Christian would look upon an acquaintance with these

truths, as necessary to salvation, but I had not supposed, that even you would claim that a man could not be an educated man, without a knowledge of them."

"It depends upon the meaning you attach to the word education. If by that is meant, as I claim, whatever educes and strengthens the mind, thereby fitting it for use and action, then my proposition cannot be disputed. But you ask for my reasons. The truth of which I have spoken, ought not to be overlooked by the student, because there is more of reality, and more of power about supernatural, than about any other kind of truth."

"Well, that seems to me rather a bold proposition."

"I am aware of it. We have already spoken in another connection of the com-

mon maxim, 'seeing is believing,' and I think we have found that those things which we cannot see, are quite as real as those which we can. Look at this beautiful scene, which we have so often admired from this point, those noble old trees covering the town below us, with their broad canopies of leaves; those graceful spires, pointing so significantly to the blue heavens; the sparkling waters of that distant bay; that island, peeping above the horizon; that glorious sun, throwing a purple mantle spotted with gold, over all the scene; it looks real and beautiful. But there is something within you which you cannot see, which has more of reality, than all this beauty and splendour of material things; something that will be instinct with life and intelligence, ages after this scene is no more

for ever. All this living, sparkling, beautiful world beneath us, has not as much of true reality, as your mind which contemplates and is impressed by it. When the colossal Pyramids of Egypt, ages hence, shall have crumbled down, and left not a fragment to mark the spot where they stood for centuries, the minds that planned those huge monuments, will still live on unconscious of decay. And so all truth pertaining to the spiritual world, has more of deep, and eternal reality about it, than that which pertains to the changeful and dying material creation. The mind, the earnest, thoughtful, craving mind, turns away from this shadowy and transitory realm, and asks where it can find that which is real, which is certain, which is enduring. No voice comes in reply from the

world of nature. But from the supernatural world, borne to the ear of the soul through the revelation of the Infinite One comes an answer, which declares that God is real; that right is real; that immortality is real. On such truths as these, the restless mind can repose with unwavering certainty. It is the province of divine revelation to furnish truth, about which there can be no doubt or question, and which exerts the most invigorating, uplifting and expanding influence on the mind. Some writer has well said that it was for want of this sure and satisfying element in education, the knowledge of spiritual and eternal realities, the mind of the immortal Plato was the victim of dissatisfaction and longing; and that for the same reason, the poet Goethe, after exploring with unwearied assiduity,

every other field, confessed that through a life of more than half a century, he had never known a moment of true intellectual repose. And the same writer declares 'that from the wild and passionate restlessness of Byron and Shelley, the evidence is decisive that a spiritual and religious element must enter into the education of man, in order to inward harmony and rest.'

"But," continued Smith, for Robinson listened without reply, "the truth of which I speak, has more power in it than all other truth. The human mind, itself an emanation from the Deity, immaterial in its nature, spiritual in its essence, infinite in its aspirations, and capable of endless progress, has stronger affinities with a spiritual world, and with supernatural truth, than with this material earth,

and truth which is merely natural. Even in man's apostate and morally depraved state, as you yourself will allow, when spiritual and eternal truths are brought fairly into contact with the mind, they have a power to rouse its slumbering energies, which does not belong to natural truth. The voices which speak to the deepest ear of the human soul, are not the voices of the earth; they come from an unseen world, a world of spiritual existence, and of sublime, though supernatural realities. There is no truth, no law, no principle, no fact in nature, or in natural science, which can put such a giant grasp on the mind, as the one idea of the infinite and everlasting GOD! With its mighty arm it seizes the strongest intellect, and holds it, let it struggle as it may, until it has felt its power through every

nerve and sinew of the mental system. Yet, in the struggle, though the eternal truth has not been, and cannot be, mastered, the intellectual faculties have been subjected to a truly masculine development, and the man rises with increased vigour, and a richer intellectual life from the unequal contest. You perhaps may remember a fine passage in Robert Hall's celebrated sermon on Modern Infidelity, where he thus speaks of the power of this great truth: 'The idea of the Supreme Being has this peculiar property: that as it admits of no substitute, so from the first moment it is formed, it is capable of continual growth and enlargement. God himself is immutable; but our conception of his character is continually receiving fresh accessions, is continually growing more extended and refulgent, by

having transferred to it, new elements of beauty and goodness; by attracting to itself as a centre, whatever bears the impress of dignity, order, and happiness. It borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe.'

"Then take the magnificent doctrine of the immortality of the soul from the revelation of God, and cast it with all its ponderous weight upon the human mind. The loftiest intellect must reel and stagger under the mighty burden. So it is with all the great supernatural truths. They speak to that deeper and more sensitive ear in man, to which the voices of nature whisper in vain, and bring stirring and elevating messages to the mind, from that unseen world, to-

wards which it instinctively turns as its real and satisfying home.

"Therefore I believe, Robinson, that in order to become a thoroughly educated man, you must become a close and diligent student of divine revelation. I do not say that thus your memory will be stored with the largest number of facts, but the powers of your mind will be drawn out, invigorated, and fitted to work with living and practical power. Your modes of thought will become not speculative and hollow, but practical and truthful; such as really educate the mind. Your mental energies awakened not by ephemeral and transitory, but by real and permanent objects, will grow with a manly growth, and produce solid, satisfying substance, suited to the intellectual wants of our race. The Bible! the Bible! my

friend, is the book for the scholar, as well as for the Christian. You may be indifferent to its power to purify and renovate your moral nature, to provide forgiveness for sin, and furnish weapons by which you may overcome the last enemy; but as a scholar, as a man whose professed object and occupation is mental culture, you ought not to be indifferent to the power of spiritual and eternal truth, to rouse the energies, invigorate the powers, and satisfy the wants of the immortal mind. The intellectual power of the student becomes most vigorous, when, leaving the lower walks of nature, he aspires to tread the loftier realm of supernatural realities. And it may be said of the Bible, that it is a model of perfect excellence in every department of literature in which a scholar should be a

proficient. In its history, logic, poetry, philosophy, biography, rhetoric, and eloquence, it is as superior to all other books, as He who inspired its pages, is superior to uninspired writers."

"You have certainly given me some new ideas of education," said Robinson, who had listened to his companion with attention and obvious interest. "A new field of thought and reflection is opened before me, and one which I will certainly investigate. But see! the sun is almost down, we shall scarcely be in time for evening prayers." And the classmates turned their steps in the direction of the town, and reached the chapel door, just as the last stroke sounded upon the old college bell.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONVICTION FASTENED.

THE college chapel on the Sabbath presented an interesting sight. Four hundred young men were gathered there from all parts of the country. There was the ardent son of the South, delicate in feature, and graceful in form, his dark eye flashing with brilliancy, and his whole appearance betokening his mercurial and impulsive temperament. There was the broad-shouldered, sturdy Westerner, careless and unpolished in his externals, but withal frank, good-hearted, and energetic. There was the New Englander, precise,

shrewd, diligent, and with a sly twinkle of humour about his eye, which suggested Yankee tricks, and dry jokes. There was the country lad with sun-browned face, and clothes of homely cut; and the youth from the metropolis, with his fashionable coat, and the air of town about him; in short, there was every variety of appearance, dress, and manners, in that large and youthful congregation. Yet intelligence was visible in every face, the earnestness and enthusiasm of life's morning was stamped on every brow, and none could look upon them without the deepest interest. What a field for thought and fancy was opened by that sight! What would be the after history of that youthful throng? How deep the marks which they would make upon the world! What elements of power for good or evil,

would they gather in that four years' sojourn within college walls! How many bright and sacred hopes are clustering round them, how many fond affections centre in them, how many earnest prayers go up to God in their behalf! What a deep stake have their country and the world in those young men! What interest is awakened, even in heaven, and among angels, in their character and destinies!

The feelings which filled the mind of Edgar Robinson as he entered the chapel that morning, and took his accustomed seat among his classmates, were unusually deep and serious. His conversations with Smith had moved him even more than he thought he could be moved, on the subject of personal religion, and he had begun to admit to his own heart, the

importance of that subject to himself. The appeal which his classmate had made to him as a scholar, the day before, had greatly interested and impressed him. He had determined that he would give serious attention to the services of the Sabbath; and there was something like a spirit of prayer in his heart as he took his seat, that those services might be made profitable to him.

The pulpit of the chapel was occupied by a stranger. This was an unusual occurrence, and its novelty arrested the attention of the students. He was a young man from one of the Southern States, and in appearance, manner, and style of speaking, the very antipodes of the learned Professor of Theology, who ordinarily delivered his logical, didactic discourses in a somewhat dry and formal manner, in

the chapel. Evidently inferior to him in learning, and mental discipline, in the abstract and analytical, the young stranger had, nevertheless, a free, graceful, and natural mode of address, a fine talent for the descriptive and illustrative, and an earnest and glowing style of appeal, which at once gained the ear of his youthful auditory. In his readings of the scriptures and the hymns, he showed evidently that he was a man of refined taste, and correct appreciation of the beautiful and sublime in Holy Writ, and sacred song. He announced as his text the familiar passage, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." The introduction to his sermon interested Robinson very much, and prepared him to listen to the discourse with profound

attention. After reading the text, and repeating it in a clear and melodious voice, the stranger proceeded in an easy, graceful manner, thus:

"The boy who has been reared at the foot of Niagara, scarcely hears its roaring. It was the lullaby of his infant slumbers. He sported in childhood amid the sound of its many waters. He grew up to manhood, with the echoes of its mighty anthem reverberating around him, until he became unconscious of that sublime music, which thrills and awes the stranger's heart. This illustrates the principle that familiarity with any object tends to weaken its power over the mind. Who thinks of the inestimable value of the common air which he breathes so constantly? Who realizes that it is his life? It has been blowing around him

in its purity and freedom, ever since his birth. He has never known the want of it, and therefore has never learned its value. The same principle holds good in reference to moral truth. The most sublime and momentous truths are those which are plainly revealed, and constantly pressed upon men, and they are those to which they are most indifferent. That greatest of all truths, *There is a God;* written on the earth beneath in lines of beauty, flashing from the heavens above in streams of light, borne upon the winged blast, and stamped upon the conscience of man, is not the truth which moves the hearts, and controls the lives, and exalts the destinies of men. No! myriads of our race have heard the annunciation from nature and from revelation, and with here and there a solitary exception, are living and dying, as if God were not!

"And yet," continued the preacher, "as if in the face of this very principle, do I stand here, to place before your minds one of the most common, and most neglected truths in the word of God. The language of the Divine Redeemer, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,' is familiar to your ears. You have heard it again and again, in days gone by. It has been urged upon you in every variety of address, and with beseeching and eloquent importunity, until it has ceased to have any power over many of your minds. And as the stranger names it to-day, though you may listen with respectful attention, it would not be strange, if there should be a feeling of disappointment at the triteness of his theme. And yet, dear young friends, as I have sought

with some solicitude for a fitting subject, I have not been able to select one more appropriate to this occasion. To me, it is one of no ordinary interest. I see before me a noble band of young men, gathered within these classic halls, to prepare to enter, with high hope and lofty ambition, the crowded arena of actual, earnest life. Each, doubtless, has traced out for himself, the path in which he is to tread; and as his eager eye follows its windings, perpetual sunshine sparkles on the track, and hope spans it with her bow of promise. Far be it from me to bring clouds upon your future journey, or to attempt to dim the radiance of that beautiful arch. We who are bearing the burden and heat of the day, have begun to find out, that it sometimes happens in this world of sin and sorrow, that

'Hope when she paints her gay bow in the air,
Leaves its brilliance to fade in the night of despair;
And joy's fleeting angel ne'er sheds a glad ray,
Save the gleam of the plumage that bears him away.'

"But you now hear only the singing of the morning lark, and why should I bid you listen to the melancholy music of the dirges of the evening. Yet what theme so fitting as our Redeemer's words to-day! As I stand here, a stranger from a distant state, to speak to you a message from God, not only my solemn duty to him from whom I hold my high commission, not only the responsibility which is thrown around this occasion, by the thought that I shall yet meet you all in the judgment day; but the very laws of propriety and fitness constrain me to this theme. Science needs here no advocacy of mine. Ambition, wealth, pleasure, and love, have their commissioned ministers, who

will faithfully press their claims upon you. My great errand to you in the name of God is, to call you to consider the paramount obligations and duties, which, both as scholars and as men, you owe to religion. And while the god of this world may invite you to engage in the strife for gold, or fill your ear with the trumpet call of ambition, or bid you join the throng who pay their homage at the shrine of mirth, I address you in the words of Jesus, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' I stand by your side, as you look with eager eye, and throbbing heart, from these college halls, out upon the brave world, and long to join the ranks of those who strive to win her treasures or her crowns, and with a brother's voice, and

a brother's heart, beseech you, ere you plunge into the crowded arena of actual life, to give some consideration to the paramount claims which the religion of Jesus has upon you, as scholars and as men."

This introduction, spoken with earnestness and grace of manner, and so different from the more formal addresses to which he was accustomed to listen, forcibly arrested Robinson's attention. He felt that the speaker was in sympathy with his audience, and with him, and he prepared himself to listen with all his attention to his discourse.

A brief, but able exposition of the divine origin of Christianity, as enforcing its paramount claims upon men, constituted the first head of the discourse. After proving that the message of re-

ligion was one from heaven, the young preacher with a kindling eye, and impassioned manner, burst forth in an appeal, in something like the following language: "Tell me, my youthful brethren, with what more appropriate theme could I address you, as with eager step, you are preparing to rush forth into 'the world's broad field of battle,' to engage in its exciting strifes? I throw myself in your way, and ask you to pause a moment in your course. Do you say to me, 'Stand aside, delay us not, life calls us to its work; the world's cry rings in our ears; the field is before us; wealth is to be gained; laurels are to be won; cups of pleasure are to be quaffed?' I tell you these are the voices of the earth; I speak to you a message from heaven! With what authority can the

world, or her ministers address you, that can for a moment compare with the authority of a message like this? Will you turn away from God, to listen to man? Shall the puny articulations of human eloquence, as they speak to you of earthly things, so absorb your attention, that you cannot hear the sublime and impassioned accents of heavenly truth, as they discourse of infinite and eternal realities? Oh no! let it not be said that God hath spoken to you from heaven, and you would not listen to his voice. Religion is the voice of God to you. It is the voice of a father, crying, 'My child, my wandering child, why hast thou forsaken me?' It is the voice of a sovereign exclaiming, 'My lawful subject, why hast thou rebelled against me?' It is the voice of a Redeemer crying, 'Condemned

and lost one, look to me and be saved.' It is the voice of a friend saying, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It is the voice of the eternal Judge exclaiming, 'Prepare to meet thy God!' What are all the voices of the earth compared to these? With an earnestness and solemnity which should arrest your immediate attention, and render you insensible to all inferior things, do they press upon you the Saviour's admonition, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

The expanding and cultivating influence of religion upon the human mind, illustrated by a graphic description of the literary treasures and beauties of the

Bible, formed the second division of the sermon. Then in the third place the preacher presented the power of religion to purify and adorn the character. Under this head he compared the morality of the Bible, with that of the ancient classics, and systems of philosophy, showing, by examples of distinguished men in sacred and profane history, the great superiority of the former. After fully traversing the field thus opened, the preacher proceeded to his last division in the following language:

"Thus I have spoken to you of the claims of religion, considered in respect to its divine origin, its intellectual influence, and its power to purify and adorn the moral character. Important and interesting as are these topics, there is yet one which as far transcends them, as the

feverish shadows of time are inferior to the mighty substance of eternity. *It is the influence of religion on the eternal salvation and glory of the soul.* This is the last, but the greatest theme of my discourse to you to-day, but Oh ! how incompetent I am to do it justice ! This is the point where my subject comes nearest to you, and addresses you truly as *men*, and presses its claims on you as such with overmastering force. It has ever been a foul slander on religion, that it degraded and vilified human nature, and painted humanity in the darkest and most repulsive colours. No system of human philosophy with all its boastings, ever so dignified human nature, ever so fully recognized its original nobleness, and made such provision for repairing its magnificent ruins, rearing again the stately col-

umn now lying in the dust, and restoring its former splendours to the defaced and dishonoured temple. The great truth of christianity, that the Son of God died for sinful man, pays a most impressive tribute to that race, in whose behalf such a stupendous sacrifice was made. And the admonition of my text, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,' comes to you as men, recognizing the noblest fact about your being—the fact that each of you has an immortal soul, whose eternal salvation should be an object of your first and fondest regards.

"In proportion, then, as you entertain the loftiest views of man, as he was, and as he may be again, through the recovering grace of God, should you be deeply interested in religion. What are you? Not a mere animated clod, a being made

to drudge upon the earth for three-score years and ten, and then sink into annihilation; but a man with a soul, spiritual in its nature, infinite in its powers, of exquisite susceptibilities, and of boundless duration. The life of the body is not your life. Death may shiver the casket, but he cannot touch the gem. He may strain and sunder the cords of the frail tabernacle, but the immortal tenant can spring unhurt from its ruins, and smile in derision at the skeleton king. The soul is the man—without it, you have but the shell of humanity, a cold, passionless, dead thing, incapable of thought, feeling, or action. But the soul has powers which can scarcely be limited. It can travel on untiring pinion, through all the realms of space. It can enter the vast store-house of nature, and bring forth her most hid-

den treasures. It bends the elements to its control; it uses the swift winds as its ministers, and by them propels its huge ships across the ocean, and circumnavigates the globe. It spans the earth with its iron roads, and over plains, and across rivers, and through the bowels of the mountain, drives over them, its thundering car. Yea! it snatches the winged lightning from the clouds, and sends it obedient on its errands. Who can limit its powers, or say to it, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther?' Its susceptibilities of joy or sorrow, too, are alike vast and immeasurable. Every chord attuned to gladness or anguish, is stretched across it, and acute and diversified as are the nerves of physical sensation, they are cold and inactive, compared with those that vibrate within the soul. They can

respond to the music of angels, or the howlings of fiends. They can thrill with holy rapture, or be wrung with guilty despair. They can make a blessed heaven for the man, or they can kindle for him the fires of hell.

"To souls like these—of masterly powers, of exquisite sensibilities and undying life, Religion offers her purifying and saving influence. Condemned as man is by a holy and inexorable law, she reveals to him a way by which the condemnation can be taken off, and the captive be redeemed. Fallen far from his former holiness and the sublime grandeur of his character, she restores him from his degradation, and brings out in his soul, in all its beauty, the lost image of God. By nature depraved, and averse from good, the affections of his heart wandering from

that which is true and right, and clinging with intense fixedness to unworthy and perishing things, she changes the evil heart, washes away its pollution, fixes the wayward affections on holy and satisfying things, and brings all the passions of the soul into harmony with the laws of holiness and truth. She bears up the man in every sore struggle with temptation, strengthens him in every conflict with sin, dries his tears, and comforts his desolate heart at the grave of those whom he loves, goes with him in his lonely journey through the dark valley, makes him conqueror, and more than conqueror in the mortal struggle, and then crowns him in heaven with a crown of glory, which shall never fade away. And now, by all that is noble and precious about your being, by all your hopes of pardon, and

bliss, and glory which will never fade or die, I charge you to beware how you neglect the claims of religion. To do it safely you must be more or less than men. But as men, true men, with souls that can soar to share the blessedness of the cherubim, or sink to the tortures of fiends, you cannot be indifferent to the claims of Jesus, for he only can redeem, sanctify, and save your noble, your immortal spirits.

"Yea!" continued the youthful preacher, as he closed the Bible, and leaning over the pulpit, fixed his brilliant eyes glowing with holy enthusiasm full on the listening crowd below, "would that the voice of the stranger could ring within the deepest chambers of your spirits, and wake thrilling, lasting echoes in the bosoms of this youthful band! I know that as you stand on the border-line of the great bus-

tling world, and the distant hum of its busy crowd strikes on your ear, you may be impatient of this appeal. You see in the distance, and 'distance lends enchantment to the view,' the sparkling of earth's wealth, the glitter of her crowns, the seducing brightness of her joys. It is as if you gazed upon some brilliant pageant as it passed along, and your hearts are panting to mingle in the exciting scene. Yet stay one moment, and listen to the parting admonition of one, whose voice, perhaps, you will never hear again. I would not call you from active, honourable life; I would not quench nor dim the fire of ambition that burns within you. But I would have you fitted for life, furnished with every element of dignity, usefulness, and happiness, and taught how to use them. And I tell you, that

you cannot be fitted to live, save by the influences of piety. Unless you recognize the noblest fact about your own being, the fact of your immortality, and base all your plans, purposes, and endeavours on this, you will never truly live. You may run ambition's exciting race, and reach the topmost round on the ladder of fame. You may mingle in the strife for gold, and scrape up your portion of its shining dust. You may revel for three-score years and ten, in the pleasures of earth. But then! ah, then! as you lie on your dying bed, and the things of the world are slipping from your cold and palsied fingers, and a dread eternity looms up in its vast and fearful reality before you, then, scholars as ye are, learned here in all the depths of mathematical science, then calculate and solve

this mighty problem, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' And beware! beware that ye be not left to work out that fearful sum in figures of fire, on the burning walls of an eternal hell!"

The preacher ceased, amid a most impressive silence, and with far more than usual solemnity and order, the students retired from the chapel. Upon Robinson, the sermon made a deep impression. The scene in his mother's chamber again came up to view. The question, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" rang in his ears. "*I must not stop where I am. I must seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, without delay,*" was his inward conviction

and resolution, as he walked slowly to his room.

Among the group that knelt in the division room, at the prayer meeting that evening, was Edgar Robinson.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PEACE FOUND.

THEY greatly mistake, who look upon college-life as a scene of nothing but constant temptation to their sons; a fiery ordeal from which few come out unscathed. If there are agencies there which are potent for evil, there are also those which are potent for good. If the walls of college gather within themselves many vicious young men, to be tempters and corrupters of others, they also gather some of the best, and noblest youth, whose influence is conservative and purifying, in a very blessed degree. The

intimacies which are formed there, afford facilities for good, as well as for evil. A student will listen to a classmate, when no one else can gain his ear. Nowhere has sympathy so wide a field, so operative and influential an agency. All are equals, and companions of nearly the same age, associated in the same pursuits, animated by kindred hopes, and swayed by kindred motives. Their intercourse and address is free, direct, and fraternal. They are like a band of brothers. A revival of religion, in college, finds not only a most important, but a most hopeful field. And the history of such seasons, when carefully examined, will show that the proportion of cases of professed conversion which prove delusive, is smaller than in ordinary communities. Could the history of the rooms in the

halls of our colleges, especially of those which distinctly recognize the religious element in education, be written, what a record it would be! To how many earnest and believing prayers, have those stained and dingy walls re-echoed! How often has that bare and comfortless apartment been pervaded with the presence of the Spirit of God! How many tears of godly sorrow for sin, of holy joy in forgiveness, have dropped on that rough floor! How many vows have there been breathed of consecration to God and his service, which have been fulfilled in years of toil and sacrifice and usefulness, in many cases, in wild and savage lands, across the sea! College rooms are not always scenes of riot and dissipation, of profanity and ribaldry. They have been the birth-places

of souls, the temples of God's presence, the gates of heaven.

Our young friend Robinson began now to feel the influence of that Divine Spirit, whose presence had been manifest for weeks in the institution. He no longer felt indifferent to the work of grace which was still going on about him. He attended regularly the meetings for prayer, and he prayed often and earnestly in private, for pardon and salvation. He began to feel more and more a sense of sin. He looked back to the time when he could talk so coolly about scepticism, and express doubts of the truth of christianity, with a sort of inward horror. He felt a conviction that there was a reality in religion, that was deeper than any mere intellectual process could make it, and a longing to know something of it

personally. He prayed and read his Bible daily, but still he seemed to make no progress. He did not know what to do, for he thought that there was a great deal to be done before he could hope to be a christian. And the difficulty with him, was to know where he must begin. The question, the great question with him was, "What must I do, to be saved?"

After a day or two spent in trying to solve this problem, during which his mental anxiety and distress became at times almost insupportable, Robinson repaired to Smith's room, determined to unburden his whole heart to his friend, and ask his counsel. The latter was not aware of the state of his mind, or of the progress which he had made in feeling, since their last conversation. Robinson's first remark, however, made him fully acquainted with it all.

"Smith, I've come to ask you a question, which I have been led, I scarcely know how, to look upon as the most important one in the world, and that is, 'What shall I do to be saved?'"

"Thank God, my dear friend, that you do at last feel the importance of that question. How have you been brought to this state of feeling?"

"I tell you, I hardly know myself. But all my conversations with you have tended to convince me that there is a reality in religion, and my mind has been for weeks gradually yielding to this conviction. But the moment I admitted that it was real, I felt that the next step was to make it a matter of personal investigation and pursuit. At first, I could not make up my mind to do this. I took to study, and tried to drive the whole thing

out of my head. But it would stay there, and then when you told me, and proved it too, that I could not even carry out my desires to be a truly educated man without religion, I felt as if I was driven from my strong hold, and that it would not do for me to neglect this subject any longer. Then the sermon which we heard yesterday had a powerful effect upon me. I felt at times while that man was preaching, as if I must leave the chapel, my feelings were so much excited. The importance of religion, and the paramount character of its claims upon me as a scholar and a man were presented so vividly and so forcibly to my mind, that I could not help saying to myself, I will seek the kingdom of God, I ought to have done it before, it's a wonder God has not cut me off in my sins before this; but I will try

now to be a christian! Then I went to the prayer meeting that evening; I had never been before, and I tell you, Smith, it was something of an effort to go. But I went. Then to hear those men pray, and sing, and exhort; why I always thought I should feel disposed to sneer at such demonstrations, but I did not feel in that way, I assure you. There were men there that I had despised in my heart. I thought they were no great credit to our class. They were not brilliant men; they had never risen above an average grade of scholarship, and I thought that they just had intellect enough to be taken up with religion. But I found that those men knew something that I did not know, that there was a science in which they were far above me, and I felt as if I would gladly give all the eclat

of college honours to be able to rank with them in the knowledge of religion. Ever since that day I have felt as I never did before, I feel that I never shall be happy till I am a christian. I want to be one, and yet, I don't know how to go about it. I feel that I am a sinner, but it seems to me that I don't feel it enough, and that I am not doing enough; not making progress fast enough; in fact, my friend, the simple truth is *that I want help*. I want to be a christian, but I don't know what to do to be one, and I have come to you, to have you tell me what I ought to do."

"You know the answer which was given to the jailer at Philippi, when he asked the same question, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

"But I want to know more about

Christ. My views are not clear in regard to him, and what is the relation he sustains to men. There are some, you know, who deny his divinity, and who do not believe in the necessity of any atonement for sin—any suffering and death on the part of a third person, to make it possible for the sinner to be saved. Now, I cannot say that I really doubt the fact that Christ is divine, but I do not feel quite familiar with the argument for his divinity."

"That argument may be reduced to a very small compass. You say that some look upon the Saviour only as a man. Did you ever hear of any body who denied that he was a good man?"

"No, on the contrary, Unitarians speak of him as a perfect man; as the

best and purest man who ever lived. Indeed, no one can read the simple history of his life, without being convinced that he was the most perfect being, whom the world has ever seen."

"True, and now look at this picture. Here is a being, whom all allow to have been a perfectly good being; one whose precepts and example were a constant manifestation of heavenly purity and goodness. This being distinctly claimed to be divine. He claimed this in such unequivocal terms, that the Jewish people perfectly understood this to be his assumed character. For this, they persecuted and finally murdered him. Now he was either what he claimed to be, or he was not. In support of his claim, he worked miracles; miracles which attested his claim, and of which we have, at this day, credi-

ble evidence. He did what God only is supposed to be able to do, and he did those things for the express purpose of proving that he was God. Now, if he was not God, we have the strange spectacle of a good man, undertaking to palm off upon the world, the most gigantic fraud which can be imagined, and actually sacrificing his own life in defence of his imposture. And not only so, but by his words and deeds, he convinced other men of the truth of his claims, who were also good men, and sensible men; and they gave up their several callings, abandoned themselves to a life of poverty and hardship, and finally sacrificed their lives in support of these claims, which were nothing but delusion or fraud, if Christ was not divine. Now, this is but one of the lines of argument which we pursue on

this point, but it alone, to my mind, is perfectly conclusive. Granted that the Saviour was a perfectly good and pure being, and then taking his character, his declarations, his works, and his death, and the history of his apostles; and it seems to me that no argument could be stronger to prove that he was all that he claimed to be, God incarnate, the divine and almighty Saviour of the world."

"It would indeed, seem that reason and candor could come to no other conclusion. But, Smith, why was it necessary that Christ should suffer and die so horrible a death, before God could forgive sin? Does not this present God in a harsh and unlovely light, and as unwilling to forgive his guilty children without a bloody sacrifice? I can forgive one who has offended me, if I will, with-

out demanding that he or his substitute should suffer."

"You can, if you act in a private capacity, but not if you are at the head of a government, and the authority of that government, and the honour of law are at stake. In that case, the law must be upheld, and your own kind personal feelings toward the offender, cannot be indulged at its expense. That is not true benevolence which dishonours law. This is God's position toward us. He is our Sovereign, as well as our Father, and he must maintain his law, for on it the welfare of his universe depends. Here is the crisis where the beautiful adaptedness of the atonement is seen. Christ comes in to make good our relations to the law of God. He comes in our nature and in our place, to honour the law by a

perfect obedience, such as it demands, but which we cannot render, and then assuming our guilt, he pays its penalty by dying on the cross. By this substitution of himself, in his infinite dignity and worth, in the place of man, and his obedience and suffering in our stead, he makes it possible for God to be just, and yet to justify the believing and repenting sinner. This is not an unnecessary transaction, for God's law must be honoured, and its majesty upheld, to save the moral universe from anarchy and ruin. And it is not arbitrary or unjust, because the Saviour voluntarily assumed the task of making satisfaction to law for us, and purchasing with his blood our free pardon. He is our surety, who undertakes for us the guilty principals, and who is able and willing to satisfy the law, and

remove all legal obstructions from the way of our justification and deliverance. Now Christ having died for our sins, and risen again for our justification, the law is satisfied, and all that man needs, is simple faith in the atonement and intercession of this divine and almighty Saviour. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Faith, faith is all you need!"

"Yes, but there is the grand difficulty. What is it to believe on Christ? I must have a new heart, as the Bible calls it. I must be born again—there seems to me a great deal to be done before I get to the point of faith. If I could get *there*, then I should hope that I was safe."

"I think you are mistaken, Robinson, in supposing that there is so much to be

done *by* you, before you can believe. There is indeed, much to be done *for* you. But you need not wait to do anything before you accept the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust your salvation in his hands."

"Well, how can I get that done for me, which is necessary ?"

"I hope it has been done already. The Saviour has suffered and died on the cross, to satisfy the justice of God, and open the way for your free forgiveness. That great work, without which you never could have been saved at all, has already been done for you. You have been made acquainted with the fact, and have received the offer of pardon through his blood. Your sceptical doubts have been dislodged; your indifference has been removed; your pride has been humbled; you have been thrown

into a state of anxiety about your soul; you have begun to entertain new views of yourself, and God, and life, and religion; and you, a man who, a few weeks ago, would have scouted the idea of being anxious and distressed, and alarmed for your spiritual interests, are now in just that state, and are asking literally, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Is not all this true?"

"Yes, every word of it."

"Then something has been done *for* you, and much has been done *in* you, and it has been done by God's Spirit. You say you must have a new heart. True, but what is a new heart? It is a new state of thought, and feeling, and affection, and desire, and purpose, in reference to religion, and God, and duty. Can't you find something of this sort in

yourself, now? You certainly seem to me to be a very different man from what you were a fortnight since. There has been a decided change in your feelings in regard to the whole subject of religion. You feel that you need something now to satisfy the wants of your soul, to quiet your conscience, and give you peace with God."

"Yes, yes! that is it, how shall I get that?"

"By believing on Christ."

"What! now at once?"

"Certainly, what are you to wait for? You feel that you are a sinner, do you not?"

"Yes, I feel it certainly, but I don't think I feel it enough."

"Well, how much must a man who is starving feel his hunger, to warrant him

in coming to a table, which is spread for him? Why, if he feels that he is starving, that's enough. As soon as he sees the table, and is assured that he is welcome, he goes and eats. Now if you feel that you are a sinner enough to desire a Saviour, and are willing to take him on his own terms, that's feeling enough, and the sooner you go to him the better. You must not make the mistake, which is a very common one, of supposing that you are to have the experience of a mature christian, all at once. You might just as well expect to master all your college course, in the first term of freshman year. You will have far more feeling about your personal sinfulness years hence, than you have now, if you have been really led to feel it at all. It is not so much feeling that you want now, as action. You want

to believe on Christ, and take him for your Saviour. There is nothing for you to do, but this. That was all that Paul told the jailer, and he had far less of previous experience than you have had. His feelings covered about as many minutes as yours have days. But Paul did not tell him to wait for more feeling. He told him to believe, then and there, and he should be saved. That is all I can tell you."

"Well, Smith, I want to believe, and I do think God has begun to make me feel my need of a Saviour, but after all, this faith of which you speak, seems to me a mysterious thing. What is it? how is it exercised? how shall I know that I have it? These are the points where I am in the dark. I want to know what faith is, and how I can exercise it."

"You do know what faith is, and there is a sense in which you do exercise faith every day of your life. I will try and explain what I mean, but I fear that I shall be somewhat tedious."

"Oh, no! that is impossible. I am deeply anxious to get light on this very point. Be as full as you can be."

"Faith then, in general," said Smith, "is one of the most natural principles of the human mind. There is no such, there can be no such, thing as a man without faith. There is not a man living, in the use of his senses, who has not faith in something or somebody. It is a universal principle. It is the essential working of a rational mind. When the occasion for its exercise arrives, it acts, it acts at once, it acts independently; you cannot help its action. Thus when you saw this

morning, the purple and gold of the eastern sky, you believed that the sun was rising, and preparing to travel on his radiant course toward the west, and you arranged the business of the day with faith in that fact. When the proposition is presented to your mind that two and two make four, or that the whole of a thing is greater than one of its parts, you believe it; you cannot help believing it. You have strong faith in the proposition, and you know that you have. You have faith too in persons, as well as in things or principles. The child has faith in his father's ability and willingness to support and protect him. He will go anywhere while he holds that father's hand, or follows in his steps. When you call in a physician in sickness, you have faith in his knowledge and skill. When you em-

ploy a lawyer to conduct a case in court for you, you have faith in his ability to defend your rights. When you order a coat from your tailor, you have faith in his capacity to fit you. When you came to this institution, you had faith in the faculty, and believed that they were competent instructors. When you go into a rail-road car, you have faith in the principles of the steam engine, as applied to locomotion, and in the engineer and conductor, who have charge of the train. If you were to lend me fifty dollars, you would do it with faith in my ability to return it at the stipulated time. In short, this simple principle of faith is interwoven with the whole social fabric; and society would be completely disorganized in a single day without it. Faith, then, is one of the most natural, and con-

stantly operative principles, or states, of the human mind. It is simple in its nature, but boundless in the sphere of its operation. Nothing is beyond its reach; nothing can evade its grasp. It embraces the world of matter and of spirit; it connects the soul with everything above, around, beneath it; it takes hold of the minutest atom, and the most gigantic orb. It embraces in its domain of action, the mote that floats in the sunbeam, and the 'High and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity.' If you wish to know what a man would be like who had no faith in anything or anybody, picture to yourself an individual in the midst of a vast ocean, cut off from all connection with every other person or object, and left in a state of despairing, sinking isolation. Such is a man without faith. He is alone in the

world. He is an orphan in the universe of God. So you see, Robinson, that there is a sense in which every man is a man of faith. He cannot live, he cannot act, he cannot accomplish anything for himself or others, without faith. He must believe; he must believe in something; he must believe in somebody; or he cannot live in the world. Why, the very history of the world, is but the history of faith. Its most splendid achievements, its victories on the battle field, its progress in art, and science, and government, are only the workings and fruits of faith. All that is great and glorious in mere human affairs, is the child of faith. Thermopylæ and Marathon; the Rubicon and the Alps; the Parthenon and the Pyramids; all tell of faith, in its energy and triumph. The history of our own coun-

try illustrates the power of this principle. Faith upheld that noble Genoese, who, in spite of ridicule, opposition, and threats, boldly and resolutely steered his little fleet towards the setting sun, till the shores of an undiscovered continent broke upon his view, and another mighty name was added to the catalogue of nations. Faith brought the fathers of this nation from Germany, and France, and Holland, and the British Isles; sustained them through famine, pestilence, and bloody wars, until they reared with toil and prayer the fabric of our national existence. And now the rolling waves of our mighty population, as they sweep along the western prairies, bound over the Rocky mountains, and break upon the shores of the Pacific, send up from their billows the anthem peal of faith's triumph, America lives by faith!"

"You have drawn a very graphic and striking picture of faith indeed. But all that you have said, relates only to natural faith. I want to know what religious faith is, and how I can attain to it."

"I know it, and all that I have said is entirely relevant to that subject. I have described natural faith, and its works. You have seen what it is, and what it does. Now religious faith differs from natural only in its objects. It has the same psychological nature: that is, it is the working of the same soul with no new powers; but it is directed to religious objects, it is exercised on religious occasions, it is sustained and strengthened by religious influences. In these respects it is widely different from natural faith. And yet there is a striking resemblance in the methods and laws of its

action, a most interesting and instructive analogy. Look at it, for instance, in reference to its reception of truth. The child believes in his father. He is assured that he has one who loves him, protects and provides for him. This is a great fact in his mind, about which there is no question. Even when that father is absent from him, and he cannot see him, his faith in him does not waver, but is just as strong as when he sees him. Therefore, though he is the weakest and most defenceless of mortals, he has no care, no anxiety, no fear. He believes that his father will feed him, and clothe him, and defend him, and in this confidence he lives a careless, joyous life. *He lives by faith.* Just so, the christian has been taught by the Divine Spirit to believe in God. He has faith in his

being, his goodness, his power, his truth, his love. In proportion as this confidence is strong in his heavenly Father, is his life a peaceful and happy life. He trusts in God, and is kept in perfect peace. He looks to him for daily bread, and nightly protection. His life, his character, his fortune, his happiness, are in the hands of God. There he rejoices to leave them. Faith triumphs when man becomes like a little child, trusting all things to a heavenly Parent."

"Still, Smith, while I see how the christian may exercise this faith in God, you do not yet meet the case. I want to know how I, a sinner, an unworthy sinner, can believe, and be forgiven."

"I was going on to tell you, and to show you still the analogy between that natural faith which you do exercise every

day, and that saving faith which you wish to exercise.

"A man is attacked with a dangerous disease. He believes that he is sick. He feels that he is very sick. He believes that unless he has medical advice, and that of the right kind, he will die. Now this faith of his is an active, and operative principle. It makes him uneasy, restless, alarmed. But he has a good family physician. He has faith in him. He calls him in, states his symptoms, and asks advice. It is given. He follows it; he follows it at once; he follows it implicitly. He recovers. He lives. He lives by faith. Just so, the sinner is taught to believe what God says about him. He believes that he has a depraved nature, and a wicked heart. He believes that he is under the condemnation of God's

law, and in danger of everlasting death. He feels that, unless he can find a Saviour, he is a lost man. Now his faith in this is not an abstract, cold, barren acknowledgment, but an inward conviction, deep, living, and potential. It makes him restless, anxious, alarmed. It sometimes drives him to despair. It forces him to seek a remedy. He often tries the wrong one, and then he finds no peace. But he hears of Christ. He is told that he died for sinners, that he intercedes for sinners, that he invites sinners to come to him, and be saved. These are simple truths, intelligible truths, affecting truths. He sees their adaptedness to his case. He believes them. He does more. He acts upon them. He does not wait to do any great thing, to go through any tedious process;

to endure any long protracted agony. He goes to the Lord Jesus with his prayer—'Be merciful to me a sinner.' He flings away all other hopes. He takes hold of the promises of the gospel. He clings to the bloody cross. He cries, 'Lord! I believe, help thou my unbelief!' He does not do anything else; does not try to get rid of his sins; does not try to make himself better. *He only believes.* He just takes the Saviour at his word. He is forgiven. He comes up out of his state of sorrow, and despair, into one of joy and peace. Angels say; 'He was dead and is alive again.' And he lives by faith.

"Now, my dear friend, this is just what you need to do, and it is all that you need to do. Just believe. Just have faith in a Saviour, able, willing, ready to

save. Go just as you are, and give yourself to him, to be saved by him and him alone. You have no where else to go. You have nothing else to do. Believe what God says. Take the Saviour at his word, and you will find the peace you seek."

A new light was dawning in Robinson's mind. He began to see that there was indeed nothing for him to do, but simply to believe. He began to feel that there was no good reason why he should not at once accept an offered Saviour, and yet he almost staggered at the very simplicity of faith. He had imagined that a long and painful course of effort was before him; that a tedious and arduous struggle lay between him, and the christian's hope. But as his friend explained to him the nature of faith, and

illustrated it in his familiar but graphic methods, his mind gradually awoke to the idea, that there was no need of waiting for anything at all, before exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the thought rushed into his mind—"Oh, that I could now believe, and give myself up to the Saviour!" He turned to his classmate, and with a voice whose tremulousness testified to the intensity of his emotion, he said:

"Will you pray that I may be able to exercise this faith in Jesus, now? If I know my own heart, I want to believe at once, and I need God's help to enable me to do it. Pray for me."

They knelt together. With simple earnestness, Smith prayed for his friend. That prayer went up with acceptance to the ear of God. When they rose, there

was a calm, peaceful, but solemn expression on Robinson's face; tears were in his eyes, but not tears of bitterness. He grasped his classmate's hand, and pressed it warmly. For a moment, neither of them uttered a word. At last, Robinson said:

"I don't know how it is, my friend, but I feel a strange, sweet peace in my heart. It seems as if I had given everything up to Christ. Is it possible, that I can be a believer?"

"I trust so, I hope so," said Smith. "I think God has enabled you to take Christ at his word, and commit your soul to him, for time and eternity."

"Oh! if that be so," said Robinson, "what a blessed thing it is! I can scarcely believe it. It seems so simple, so easy, so unlike what I supposed it

was. It seems to be all taken out of my hands, and I am willing it should be. But I am amazed at the thought that it can be true. I must think of it, long and deeply, for to be mistaken now, would be fatal. Good-bye, my dear friend. If I am a christian, I owe it, under God, first to my mother, and then to you."

The friends parted. Robinson went to his room, and there, on his knees, endeavoured to give himself to Christ. He prayed long and fervently, and we will hope that his prayer was heard and answered, for His sake, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

## CHAPTER VII.

### SELF-CONSECRATION.

THERE are very many who find the subject of faith unintelligible, through its very simplicity. They imagine that religious faith must be very different from natural, that which they exercise and act upon every day of their lives. And they cannot, at first, be persuaded that no more is asked of them in believing in Christ, so far as the nature of faith is concerned, than they are constantly doing in the various relations and circumstances of life, in reference to their fellow-men. As we have before seen, there is no principle so

universally recognized, and so essential to the very existence of organized society, as faith. Men are forced by the very conditions of their being, to exercise confidence in others; to believe what others say, and to act accordingly. They see, at once, the nature and the necessity of faith in reference to the business of life, and all their temporal concerns. But when they consider its application to religion, and their spiritual affairs, it assumes a mysterious phase, and they do not comprehend its nature, and the mode of its exercise. But when they are at last enabled to see it in its simplicity, and to exercise it, they are astonished and delighted to find how simple and natural it seems, to believe in God, to put confidence in Christ. It was so with our young friend Robinson.

He thought that a long, and painful process must be passed through in his case, before he could attain to faith. And he could scarcely believe, that he could so soon be enabled to exercise it. He could not doubt the reality of the change in his feelings, in reference to the whole subject of religion. He was conscious, that his views both of doctrine and duty, were radically altered. He felt animated by new hopes, inspired by new motives, and urged to new courses of life. The more he thought of what he had passed through, the more he felt inclined to hope that God had opened his mind to truth, and had worked faith in him, in an offered Saviour. And yet it seemed to him almost a miracle. But a few weeks before, he had professed to doubt the reality of religion. Could so mighty

a change have been so soon wrought in him? Was he really a believer? Many times a day, he found himself exclaiming, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

Weeks now had elapsed, since the commencement of the revival in college. Wonderful were the gracious fruits! Some of the wildest and most dissipated students had been brought under the influence of God's Spirit, and had professed themselves as having repented of sin, and believed in Jesus. Nearly one hundred young men in the various classes, were cherishing a hope in Christ. Several of these had already devoted themselves to the work of the Christian ministry;*

* About thirty of Robinson's class eventually became ministers of the gospel. The bones of one lie on the mountains of Persia, among the heathen to whom he preached Christ.

and more than one was looking to the heathen world, as the scene of future labour, and it might be of death. The sacramental season in the college church was at hand. A number of the students were contemplating a public profession of their faith, on that occasion. Robinson could not avoid the question as to his own duty. Yet he shrunk from a public profession of religion. The step seemed to him to be one of great solemnity, and one which so young and feeble a believer as himself, would not be warranted in taking. He thought that he should wait for more assurance and experience, before publicly committing himself by an open profession. He thought it better not to profess, than, after he had done so, to bring reproach upon the cause which he had espoused.

He doubted too, at times, the thoroughness and depth of his own religious feelings, and asked himself whether it was not better for him to wait, until he should be more settled and confirmed, in mind and purpose. Still his conscience was uneasy; he knew that Christ commanded his disciples to profess him before men, and at times he had a vague consciousness, that pride might, after all, be at the bottom of his reluctance. In this state of mind he was found by his friend, who was very anxious that Robinson should avow himself publicly on the Lord's side, and who affectionately and earnestly urged this duty upon him. Robinson freely, and without reserve, opened his mind to his classmate.

"I would like to ask you two questions," said Smith. "Do you not regard

the matter of a personal union to Christ and his church, as in itself a very desirable thing?"

"Indeed I do," replied Robinson, "I regard it as desirable in the highest degree. I think of it with real feeling, and the deepest interest. If I did not think it desirable, I should not now be in this state of doubt and indecision. I do most earnestly desire to be connected with God's people, and if I could see my way clear to make a profession of religion at once, I believe I should be far happier than I am."

"Now for my second question. Do you not look upon this public union with Christ and his people as a thing to be consummated at some time? Would you be willing to think that the day would never come, which should witness this consummation?"

"No, I would not. I trust that day will come, and at no distant period."

"Well then, we have these two important admissions. That a profession of religion is desirable: and that you mean to make it at some time. Now it is a principle with men in worldly matters, that if it is desirable that a thing should be done, and they mean to do it, then the sooner it is done, the better. This is your position in regard to a profession of religion. You think it ought to be done; you mean at some time to do it. Why not do it now?"

"I would be glad to do it now, were I only prepared for it. But it seems to me that I have not feeling enough to warrant such a solemn and decided step. My judgment is convinced, my understanding is enlightened, I think my hap-

piness and usefulness would be promoted by the step, and yet I fear that I have not feeling enough to justify it. It seems to me that I am so young and inexperienced in the christian life, that I ought to wait for a deeper experience and more emotion before I take a step like this."

"Ah, my friend; if you have had feeling enough to lead you to believe in Christ, and give your heart to him as your Saviour, you need no more to justify you in saying so, by a public profession of your faith in him. How much feeling does a man need to discharge a duty, or accept a privilege? If he confesses it to be a duty, and is sensible that it is a privilege, that is all the feeling he needs. He is then prepared to embrace the first opportunity of discharging the duty, and

enjoying the privilege. This waiting for feeling is one of the most common methods which the great adversary employs to keep the christian from doing his duty without delay. Many men have yielded to this temptation, have waited for more feeling, and postponed the discharge of duty; and the consequence has been that they lived in a continual state of unrest and indecision, and loss of usefulness and comfort, and finally died with this solemn duty still unfulfilled."

"But I do not feel worthy to become a member of the church of Christ," said Robinson. "It seems to me that I ought to wait till I am better, have more knowledge, and love, and devotion, and be more likely to adorn a christian profession. There is a fearful condemnation pronounced in the Bible against those who

partake of the sacrament unworthily. I should tremble to think that I might eat and drink damnation to myself."

"My dear friend," replied Smith, "you appear to me to mistake entirely the nature of a christian profession. You say you are not good enough. Good enough for what? To acknowledge that you are not good, but that you want to be better? How much goodness does it require to do this? Not good enough to use the means which God has provided to make you better? A profession of religion is not a profession of goodness, but the very opposite. It is a profession that we feel how utterly sinful and unworthy we are, and of our entire trust in a worthy and merciful Saviour. The church is not an institution for perfect men or angels. It is Christ's school for pardoned sinners,

where they are taught how to be better, how to grow in grace, and knowledge. This college is not a place for men who have completed their education, but for those who are learners. And the church is Christ's school, intended for the spiritual education of his disciples. When a man feels truly his sinfulness, and his need of a Saviour; when he believes in that Saviour with an honest faith, and sets out to follow him in the path of holy living; Christ calls him into his church, where, by the means of grace which are covenanted and promised to his people there, he may grow better, and more useful, and more efficient as a christian, under the teaching and discipline of his Master. A great many men seem to think that they must be fit for heaven, before they are warranted in uniting with

the church. That is about as reasonable as for a man to say that he ought to be ready to graduate, before he is fit to enter college. You say you are not good enough to join the church. Your goodness is not the warrant for such a step. You are to profess Christ, not yourself. You are just to say by a public act, what you have said again and again to me privately, that you feel that you are a sinner, but you trust in a Saviour, and that you mean to honour, and love, and obey him, all your days."

"What, then, is the meaning of that fearful passage, 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body?'"

"If you examine the chapter in which that passage occurs," said Smith, "you

will find that the apostle was rebuking the Corinthians for the irregularities and excesses, of which they were guilty in their celebration of the Lord's supper. You know that they were just emerging from heathenism, and the influence of their old habits and customs was not entirely done away. The apostle found that they had fallen into the habit of celebrating the Lord's supper, somewhat after the fashion of a feast in honour of their old heathen gods; and making it an occasion of revelry and dissipation, instead of simple and solemn commemoration. He therefore reproves them for this perversion of the nature and design of the sacrament, and tells them that if they persist in thus abusing the ordinance, their celebration of it will not receive God's approbation, but his condemnation. The word rendered 'unwor-

thily,' means, in an improper and irreverent manner, and does not refer to the personal worthiness of the communicant, but to the view he had of the design of the ordinance, and his manner of celebrating it. And the word 'damnation,' means condemnation, as opposed to approbation, and the sense of the passage is, that those who come to the Lord's table in an unworthy, or unbecoming manner, and with an irreverent spirit, not understanding the nature and design of the ordinance, will not enjoy the approbation of God in communicating, but will eat and drink condemnation to themselves. But there is nothing at all in the passage intended to discourage a christian who feels his own personal unworthiness, from coming to the Lord's table. Such are especially welcome, and will have the approbation of the Saviour in coming."

"I am very much relieved by your explanation," said Robinson. "That passage has given me a great deal of uneasiness. I knew that I never could feel that I was worthy to go to the Lord's table, and it seemed as if I was not to go, until I was worthy. Your explanation satisfies my mind on that point. But still there are other reasons why I feel that the time has not come yet, for me to make a public profession of religion, and become a member of the church."

"Will you tell me what they are?"

"Certainly. One reason lies in my slight acquaintance with the doctrines of the church. There are some of these that I cannot understand. Christians and sects differ very much in respect to them. The doctrines of Divine Sovereignty, Election and Predestination, are

among this number. I do not understand them. They are perplexing and mysterious to my mind. Yet they are the doctrines of the church, and ought to be believed by those who are connected with the church. How can I, consistently, make a profession of my faith in these doctrines, which I do not at all comprehend?"

"I have no doubt," said Smith, "that this is an honest objection in your mind, but still I think it is a groundless one. We are to distinguish between the relations of doctrines, first, to the system of revealed truth; secondly to the church; and thirdly, to individual salvation; since a doctrine may be essential in any one of these cases, and not in the others. In other words, what is essential to the scheme of salvation, and to a full confes-

sion of what this scheme is, in its nature, origin, and plan, is very different from what is essential to the being of a church, and to the enjoyment of the benefits of salvation by individual believers. Those doctrines which are essential to personal salvation, are so plain, that he who runs may read, and the way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein. Repentance for sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are all that is required in order to an individual participation in the inestimable benefits of the plan of salvation. But there are other doctrines which are essential to the completeness of that plan, as a symmetrical scheme of christian doctrine, among which are some 'of high mystery,' which are to be 'handled with special prudence and care,' a full knowledge of which is not required by the

church, either as a test of piety, or a term of communion. And about these higher doctrines there has always been diversity of opinion, among honest and sincere inquirers.

"But you, in your present position, are not called upon to concern yourself with these. The command of Christ to you is, 'Come out from them and be separate:' confess me before men! This is an intelligible command. Do this thing and the church will rejoice over you as over one predestinated, in the sovereign purpose of God, unto eternal life, though you yourself knew it not. Confess Christ honestly before men as your Saviour, and he will confess you before his Father and the holy angels, as one given to him in an everlasting covenant, who shall never perish, and whom none is able to pluck

out of the Father's hands. You need not concern yourself about the higher doctrines of the school of Christ, at this point in your spiritual training. You are more concerned with the rudiments of faith and obedience. The Apostle says that 'strong meat belongeth to them of full age, even to such as, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to distinguish between good and evil.' The great question for you is: What shall I do, to promote my spiritual interests? How shall I obey God, and glorify my Saviour? Suppose a man has fallen overboard from a ship, and is struggling in the ocean. You throw him a rope, and call on him to seize it, and hold on, and you will save his life. He says, 'Oh, sir! I know I'm in the waters and in danger of perishing. I would like to avail my-

self of the means you offer me, but I can't understand how that rope is twisted: it seems very intricate, and I want to understand just how those strands are put together, so as to make a rope strong enough to hold my weight.' You would reply: 'Well, but, my dear sir, if you wait to understand all these particulars now, you'll sink and perish. It is enough for you that there is the rope. Take hold of it, and hold on for your life, and I will pull you out. And when you are out, and are safe again upon the deck of this good ship, and have got your breath, and are a saved man; then, if you please, we will sit down together and examine this rope, and find out all we can about the way in which it was twisted and made strong enough to save your precious life.' Do you see any analogy between such a case, and yours?"

"I do," said Robinson, "and another of my difficulties is relieved. But I still shrink from the obligations of a christian. I am afraid that I should dishonour my profession. And surely it is better that I should not be hasty in assuming such solemn obligations, when I may prove unfaithful to them."

"Why, Robinson, you are under a great mistake in this matter. You talk about assuming the obligations of a christian, as if this were a thing which you could do, or not do, according to your pleasure. My dear friend, these obligations are already on you. They have been on you ever since you had a being. Moral obligations lie in the nature and relations of things. They do not owe their existence to any act of ours. The very moment you became a moral and accountable

being, that moment you came under every obligation which you can ever sustain towards God. The relations which you sustain to God, imperatively demand of you, obedience, reverence, submission, love. You are already bound to love and serve your Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign. You escape no obligation by remaining out of the church. But you are neglecting one great means of enabling you to fulfil those which are already on you, and from which you can never escape. The very public acknowledgment of these obligations will itself be a great help to you in your christian course; while the means of grace connected with the ministrations and ordinances of the church, the promises of the covenant, and the fellowship of the saints, will be sources of comfort and strength

and usefulness, which you cannot have outside of the church, and for want of which you must suffer as a christian. Therefore there is no force in this objection. You are not living up to your obligations now, and you never will be in an advantageous position even for endeavouring to do so, so long as you are turning your back upon Christ, when he commands you to confess him before men."

"But," said Robinson, "there is nothing saving in a mere profession of religion, and perhaps I had better wait till the next communion season. I may then be better prepared, and may be able to take the step with more confidence."

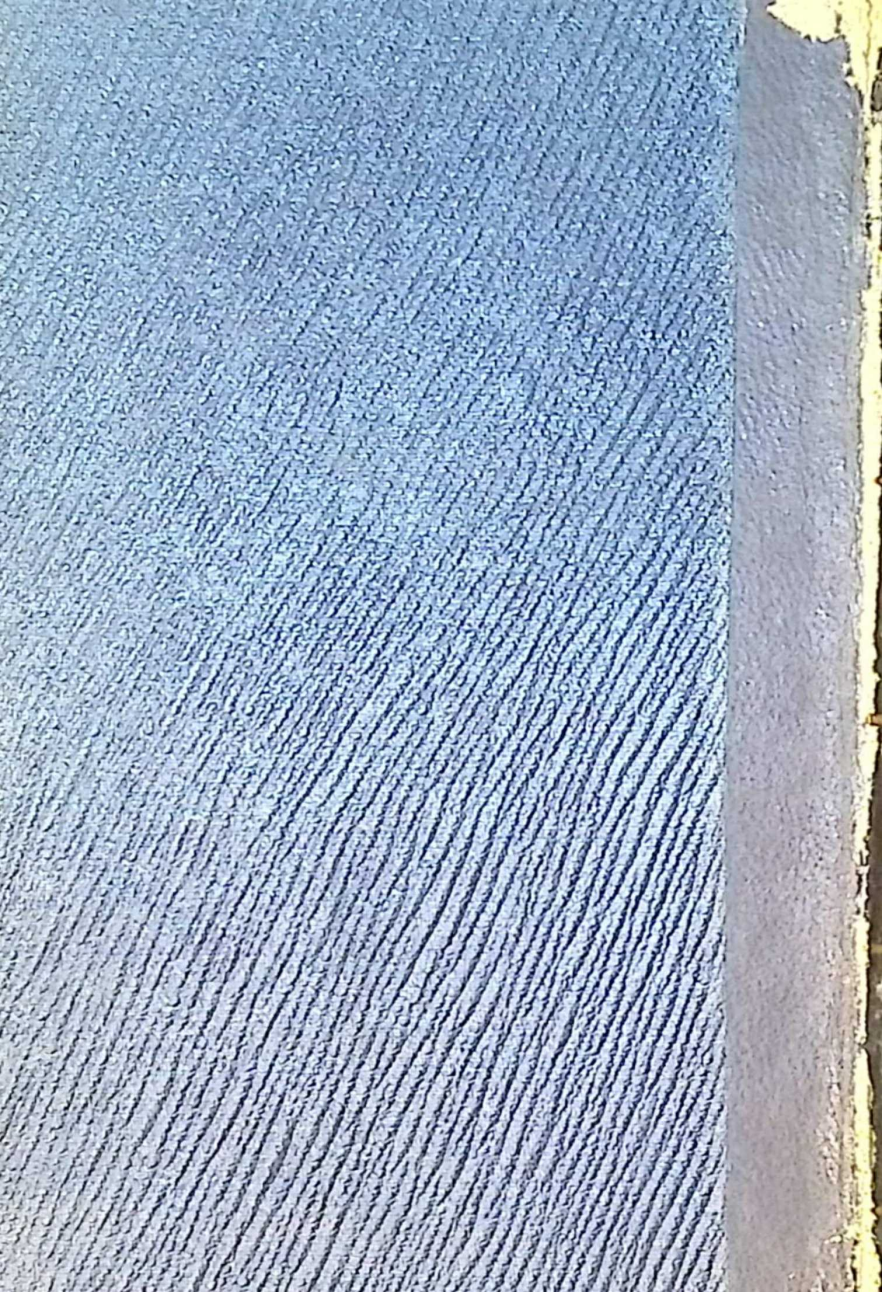
"It is true," replied his classmate, "there is nothing saving in the mere act of making an outward profession. And

doubtless a man may avoid some sacrifices by refraining from it. And if you are anxious to get to heaven by the easiest road, then perhaps you had better not seek a union with the people of God. There is certainly nothing saving in a profession. But is there anything more saving in a non-profession? And which path is most likely to lead you to heaven—that which is marked out by the divine Saviour, and to which he calls all who love him; or some other way not recognized by him, and not guarded by covenant and promise? The path of duty is the path of safety, and of peace. When you have obeyed Christ's command, you may claim his promises, and believe that he will never leave nor forsake you.

"And you speak of another communion season. There are two uncertainties

about that. One is the uncertainty whether you will live to see it; and the other is, whether if you do live you will be any better prepared for a profession of religion. I think that the Saviour is calling on you to profess your faith in him NOW, and I solemnly and affectionately exhort you to do it. These suggestions to delay it are from your worst enemy, and if you give heed to them, you are doing a grievous wrong, both to your Saviour, and to your own soul."

Here the conversation ended. Robinson thought long and deeply after his friend retired, upon the subject of their conversation, and the result was, that among the forty young men who came forward on the next Sabbath, in the college chapel, and publicly professed their faith in Christ, he was found. And that

act sealed a peace and joy in his heart which he had never known before, and the day which witnessed it was remembered with gratitude and joy in all the after years of a laborious life, spent in the service of that Saviour, to whom he then and there gave himself away in covenant for ever.

Five years after this, in a beautiful village on the banks of one of the tributaries of New England's noble river, Edgar Robinson was solemnly set apart by prayer, and the laying on of the hands of godly men, to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed pastor of the village church. Nearly twenty years have passed away, and he is still labouring to bring sinners to that Saviour, to whom he was directed by his classmate, in the young days of their college life.